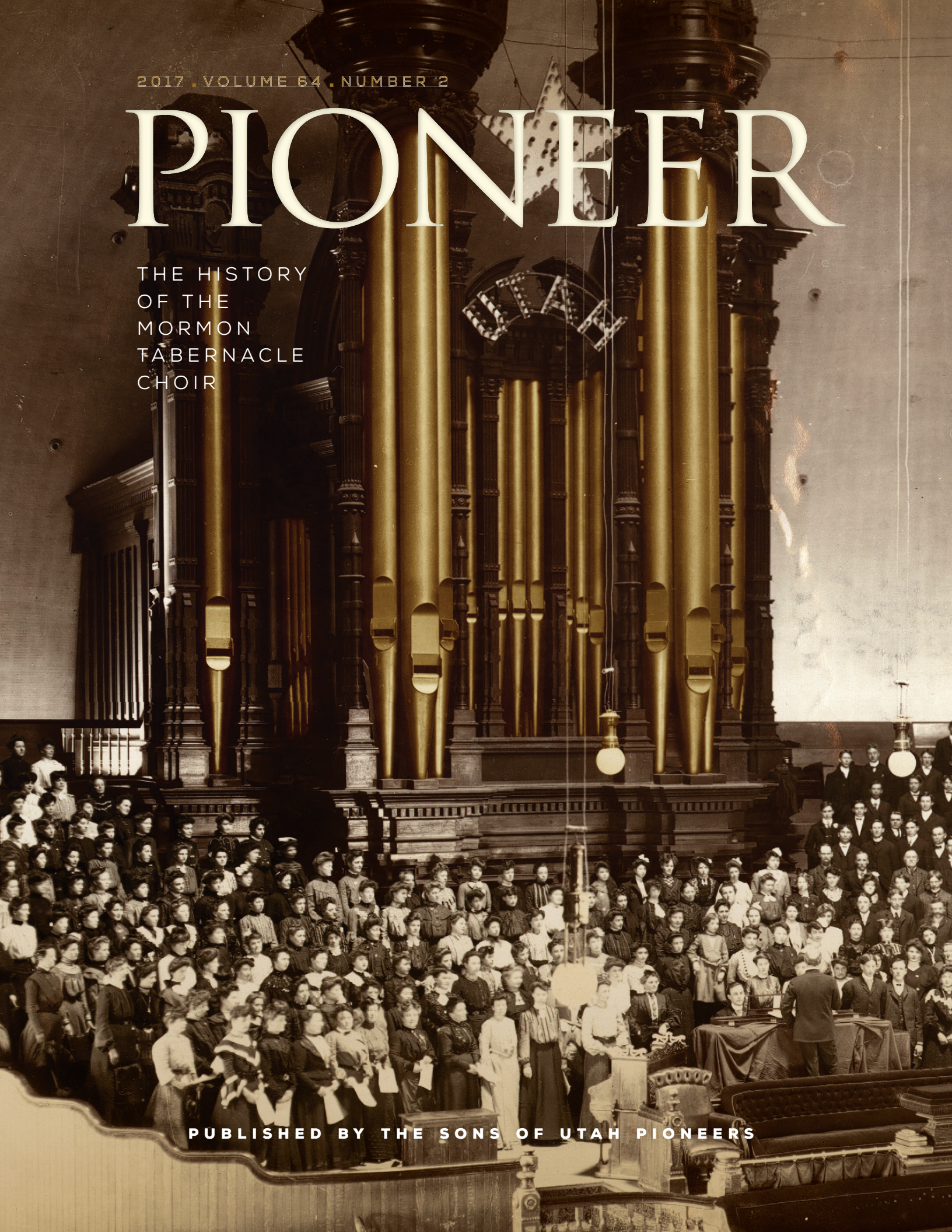
2017 . VOLUME 64 . NUMBER 2

PIONEER

THE HISTORY OF THE MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR



PUBLISHED BY THE SONS OF UTAH PIONEERS

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COVER: "Utah We Love Thee," the official state hymn of Utah, was performed by the Tabernacle Choir at celebrations held in 1896 when Utah become the 45th state. Evan Stephens composed the hymn's words and music in 1895; Stephens was Choir director from 1890–1916.

BACK COVER: An excerpt from *Music and the Spoken Word,* written by Richard L. Evans and broadcast in 1964.

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MISSION STATEMENT: The Mission of the National Society of the Sons of Utah Pioneers is to come to know our fathers and turn our hearts to them; we preserve the memory and heritage of the early pioneers of the Utah Territory and the western U.S.; we honor present-day pioneers worldwide who exemplify the pioneer qualities of character; and teach these same qualities to the youth who will be tomorrow's pioneers.

THE PIONEER VALUES: We honor the pioneers for their faith in God, devotion to family, loyalty to church and country, hard work and service to others, courage in adversity, personal integrity, and unyielding determination.

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One of my fondest memories as a young person was lying on the living room floor in front of our console radio and listening to the voice of Richard L Evans and the music of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. The Sunday radio broadcast, *Music and the Spoken Word,* always began with the stirring musical words, "Gently Raise the Sacred Strain." I loved it.

As the restored Church found safety and a measure of privacy in the mountains and deserts of the American West, the Lord's hand was evident in preparing the development of the renowned Choir, which traces its beginnings to the chorus that sang at an August 1847 general conference meeting. Two years later, in October 1849, John Parry directed 85 Welsh converts in singing several hymns during general conference sessions. Following the conference, President Brigham Young invited Brother Parry to formally organize a choir to provide music at future conferences.

I have enjoyed learning about Joseph Ridges, born in England across the street from an organ factory. As a young man, he immigrated to Australia, where he built his first organ. Upon joining the Church, he disassembled the organ, packaged the parts in soldered tin shipping cases, and sailed with them across the Pacific to California. Loading the cases into twelve wagons pulled by mule teams, he transported the organ to Salt Lake City. Ridges and his organ are subjects of a new exhibit in the Church History Museum, an exhibit celebrating the organ's 150th year in the Tabernacle.

Soon came the inspired construction of the almost acoustically perfect Tabernacle in 1864–67. Nearly a thousand miles from the closest cities or outposts, pioneer builders relied on local materials. Brigham Young had observed Henry Grow building a lattice-truss bridge across the Jordan River. He asked Grow if he could use this technique to create a domed roof for the Tabernacle, which Grow was able to accomplish by relying on rawhide straps and wooden dowels instead of nails. The addition of the freestanding balcony by Truman O. Angell perfected the astounding acoustical qualities of the building. President Young asked Ridges to enlarge the organ and install it in the Tabernacle to accompany choirs singing there. The organ's 32-foot gold-painted pipes, the only round wooden pipes of this size in the world, have become a hallmark of both the Tabernacle and the Choir it houses.

In succeeding years many talented musicians have contributed to the popularity and excellence of the Choir. And in 1929 the Choir extended its reach beyond the walls of its famous Tabernacle home when it commenced the longest-running network radio broadcast in history, *Music and the Spoken Word.* The Choir is now heard around the world via popular recordings and radio, television, Internet, and other satellite broadcasts. It has successfully helped carry the message of the restored gospel worldwide as its angelic voices "gently raise sacred strains" week after week and win hearts everywhere. Its music continues to appeal to children and youth (as it did to me) and adults, to people of all ages and backgrounds. As a Church, we thank the Lord for what has lovingly become known as America's Choir, claimed by all Americans as a gift to the world. The Tabernacle Choir stands as a remarkable ambassador of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Members of the Tabernacle Choir depart from Salt Lake City on the Union Pacific to participate in the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR

PIONEERS AND AMBASSADORS YESTERDAY AND TODAY

by Lloyd D. Newell and Heidi S. Swinton

How do you tell the story of a choir that began singing to sagebrush and now fills concert halls at home and abroad? How do you capture more than 88 years of continuous weekly broadcasting that now reaches into every corner of the world?

The story begins in the summer of 1847, when trail-weary pioneers began planting crops and establishing a religious haven in the wilderness of the Salt Lake Valley. Every Sunday they gathered for worship services under a crude bowery of brush and branches, where they sang praises to God. A favorite was "Come, Come Ye Saints," an anthem by William Clayton with lines that describe well their singing in the desert:

> *We'll make the air with music ring,*
> *Shout praises to our God and King. . . .*
> *Oh, how we'll make this chorus swell—*
> *All is well! All is well!*[1]

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Needless to say, there were not many choirs like this one making the western air ring with hallelujahs in 1847. These were not the typical fur trappers, prospectors, explorers, or homesteaders seeking a grubstake in the West. No, these were humble religious folk—converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, primarily from western Europe and the northeastern United States. Most of them would have preferred to remain in their comfortable original homes. But after their prophet, Joseph Smith, was martyred in 1844, mobs drove them from Nauvoo, Illinois—their adopted home—and their new leader, Brigham Young, led them West in search of religious freedom. It was love of the restored gospel, not love of adventure or open spaces, that brought them to what they considered the "place which God for us prepared, far away in the West." They took with them what they could carry in wagons and in their hearts—courage, tenacity, faith in God, and of course, a love of singing.

THE MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR

A Chronology of Events and Accomplishments from 1849 to the Present

by Bob Folkman, *Pioneer* Editorial Board

The worldwide fame of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir underscores its own history, a history filled with remarkable people and events. There is no single date on which the Choir was formed, as it originated from a variety of pioneer musical groups. There is no single leader who was its founder, other than Brigham Young. While including key events and individuals from the beginning years, this list places special emphasis on the effects of progressing technology as the Choir evolved from a frontier church choir in 1849 to a media force in the twenty-first century.

JAMES SMITHIES was named the third conductor to lead the Choir. He served six years in that position, according to official listings of Choir directors. As an example of the informal structure of the early conference choirs, Smithies is also listed four years earlier as the director of the choir that sang at the April 1852 general conference where the first or "Old" Salt Lake Tabernacle—an adobe building on the southwest corner of Temple Square—was dedicated.

1849 | 1850 | 1854 | 1856

APRIL: JOHN PARRY, a Welsh convert to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was asked by Brigham Young to form a choir to sing primarily at general conferences. From 1849 to 1854 Parry served as the first director of this "conference choir" that would evolve into the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

STEPHEN GODDARD became the second conductor of the early conference choir. He had been a well-known singer in Nauvoo and the director of the Church's principal choir there. He came West in the first pioneer company with Brigham Young.

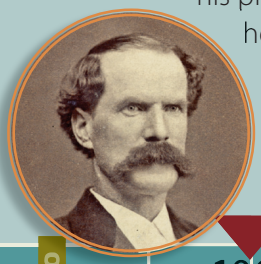
Welsh converts are credited with establishing the fine choral tradition in the Church. In the mid-19th century, thousands of Welsh emigrated from the coastal region of Swansea, the farmlands of Carmarthenshire, and the coal regions of Merthyr Tydfil. They sang a farewell as their ship left the dock at Liverpool. Observed one listener, "Their sweet voices [resounded] throughout the city, attracting the attention of and causing amazement to thousands of spectators."[2]

And they kept on singing. John Parry, a minister and musician from North Wales, held choir practice onboard the ship from 10 to 11:30 every morning and from 4 to 5 in the afternoon. Once on the plains, George A. Smith's pioneer company formed a Welsh choir that sang regularly. William Morgan, a participant in the choir, recorded, "As we sang the first part of 'When the Saints Shall Come,' we saw the wagons empty and their inhabitants running toward us as if they were charmed."[3] When asked about their music, one of the Welsh pioneers responded, "The hills of Wales were the school house and the Spirit of God was the teacher."[4]

Rudolph Kurz, a German-born traveler who followed a company of Welsh pioneers on the plains, observed their singing and noted, "When they met together for choir practice one evening in every week, I found real pleasure in hearing them sing. What made this particularly enjoyable was the fact that in the western part of the United States choir music was so seldom heard."[5]

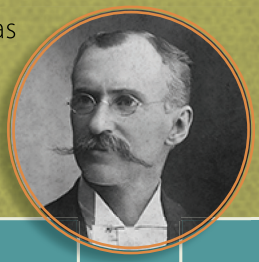
If the pioneers expected their Promised Land to be flowing with milk and honey, the barren Salt Lake Val-

CHARLES JOHN THOMAS was appointed the director of the Choir. A musical prodigy, he also held the position of the musical director at the Salt Lake Theatre. Like his predecessors, he received no salary for either position.



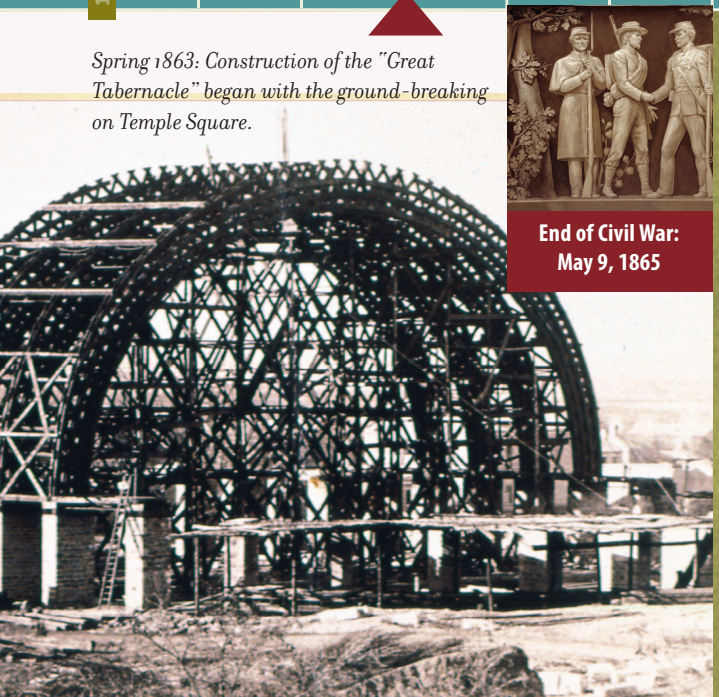
NOVEMBER 19, 1865: ROBERT SANDS led the Choir for four years. Sands was born in Ireland in 1828 and joined the Church in 1849. He is listed in the conference minutes as the conductor of the "Salt Lake Choir" that sang for the dedication of the "New" Salt Lake Tabernacle in October 1867. He passed away at the age of 44 only three years after being released from his position.

JOSEPH J. DAYNES was appointed tabernacle organist in 1867 when the new organ in the still incomplete new tabernacle was able to be played. He had been the organist in the old tabernacle prior to this time. He served until 1900.



1860 | 1862 | 1863 | 1865 | 1867 | 1870

Spring 1863: Construction of the "Great Tabernacle" began with the ground-breaking on Temple Square.



End of Civil War: May 9, 1865

OCTOBER 6, 1867: The Choir, led by Robert Sands, sang at the Thirty-Seventh Semi-Annual General Conference of the LDS Church. This conference was held for the first time in the "New" Tabernacle. The still unfinished building was informally dedicated by Brigham Young on this date. The Choir performed a new hymn composed by Eliza R. Snow for the occasion. The new Salt Lake Tabernacle was not completed and formally dedicated until October 1875.

Eliza R. Snow

ley was likely a disappointment. It provided solitude, but mostly because it was not paradise. The pioneers' task, then, was to make "the desert … blossom as the rose" (Isaiah 35:1) and watch out for the thorns. The going was hard. They found the dry, hard-baked earth to be nothing like the lush farmland of Nauvoo or Missouri or England or Wales. Their difficult work made Sunday gatherings and Sunday singing all the sweeter. In fact, music was, arguably, essential to the work.

So just months after the first wagons rolled in, Brigham Young asked John Parry to prepare a choir for the first general conference in the valley.[6] The choir rehearsed twice weekly and sang not only at conference but also at other Church functions, including July Fourth and Pioneer Day celebrations. Printed choir music was not readily available, so part of each rehearsal was dedicated to memorizing the words of the songs.

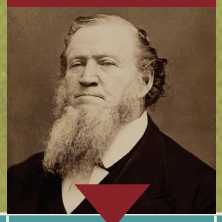
If crops often had trouble growing in the desert valley, a strong choral tradition did not. By the early 1850s, music schools began to spring up to provide voice instruction, and congregations throughout the territory served as ad hoc training grounds for what would become the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

The Tabernacle—a Home for the Choir

The Choir first made its home on Temple Square in an outdoor bowery, but the Saints quickly outgrew it and the small tabernacle that replaced it. In April 1863, Church

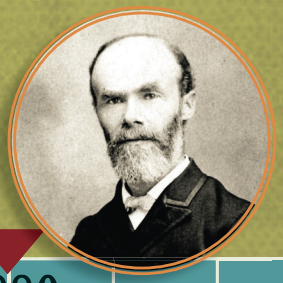
GEORGE CARELESS became the Choir conductor and continued in that position for eleven years, the longest tenure of any of the first six conductors. He composed the music to nine hymns in the current hymnbook, including "The Morning Breaks."

The Tabernacle organ was draped in black for Brigham Young's funeral.



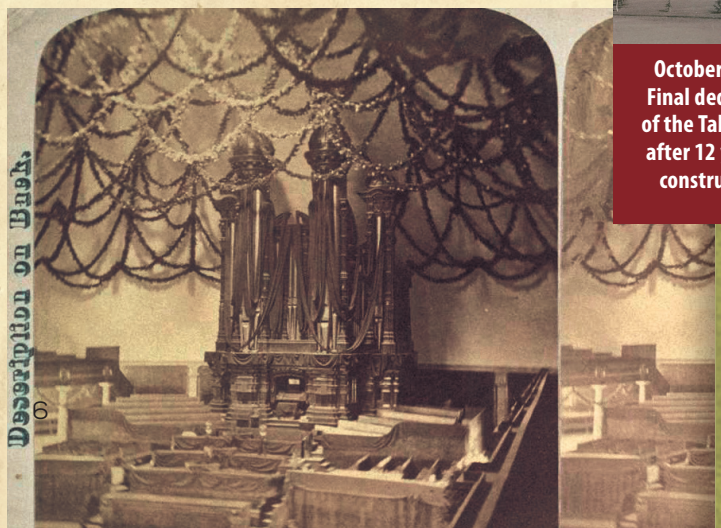
Death of Brigham Young: August 29, 1877

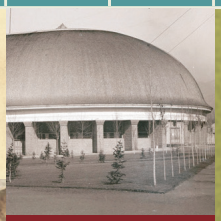
EBENEZER BEESLEY was named the seventh conductor of the Choir. He is remembered today as the composer of twelve hymns presently found in the LDS Church hymnbook. He served for nine years.



1869 | 1870 | 1875 | 1877 | 1880

In 1869, the addition of the Tabernacle's balcony added 3,000 seats, bringing total seating to about 10,000. The balcony also unexpectedly improved the acoustics of the building, reducing echoes.





October, 1875: Final dedication of the Tabernacle after 12 years of construction.

SEPTEMBER 28, 1880: About 150 members of the Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir traveled by train to American Fork where it joined with the American Fork Choir and the "Tabernacle Band" for an extensive program of music in the local meetinghouse. This was the first trip by the Choir away from Salt Lake City.

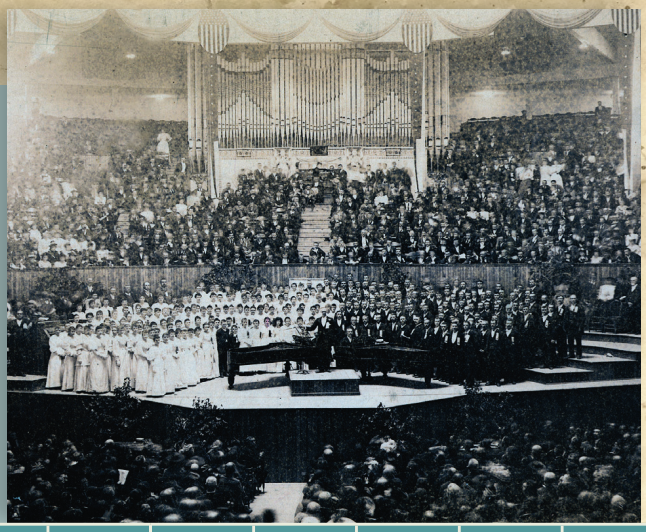
leaders announced plans to build a massive tabernacle to accommodate its quarterly general conferences, along with other religious and community events. The intent was to seat as many as 10,000—ambitious plans for a group that only 16 years earlier was rattling down Emigration Canyon in covered wagons. (Today the building seats about 7,000.)

Valley settlers were still 1,500 miles from the nearest rail line. Building materials—nails in particular—were hard to come by. The Saints built with what they could shape from the surrounding canyons or forests: red sandstone from Red Butte Canyon and wood cut in the Wasatch Mountains for the skeleton, wood totaling 1.5 million feet of lumber. The design was simple: a massive dome supported by 44 sandstone piers. But the execution would require a feat of pioneer ingenuity. The 60-foot-tall arched trusses made of lattice timbers spanned 150 feet, making the structure an engineering marvel. Initially the elongated domed roof was covered with hand-hewn shingles and then replaced with copper sheeting. (The Tabernacle's distinctive aluminum covering was added in 1947.)

The staggering cost of $300,000 was amassed in donations from the people, including building materials, bread, vegetables, jewelry, clothing, and most of the labor. The building was usable by October 6, 1867, and formally finished and dedicated in October 1875. The Mormon Tabernacle Choir has been singing in the Salt Lake Tabernacle ever since.[7]

The Tabernacle is known for its spectacular acoustics, making it the perfect home for a choir. What is it that enables

By 1891: The choir seating had been moved from the floor of the Tabernacle, where only a railing separated the singers from the audience, to a new choir loft in front of the organ pipes and well above the rostrum and pulpit.



1890 1891 1893

OCTOBER , 1890: EVAN STEPHENS, a native of Wales, became the director of the Tabernacle Choir and served for 26 years. He is the composer of nineteen hymns in the current hymnal, as well as of the "Hosannah" anthem sung for the 1893 Salt Lake Temple dedication and still sung at temple dedications today.

AUGUST 29, 1893: Two hundred fifty Choir members, accompanied by an additional one hundred fifty non-singers, left Salt Lake City to travel to the Chicago Welsh Eisteddfod, a choral singing competition held September 5th to 8th during the Chicago World's Fair. On the way to Chicago, the Choir performed in Denver, Kansas City, and St. Louis, and in Omaha on September 10th during the return trip. At the Eisteddfod, the Choir performed well, with many listeners believing the Choir was the best chorus in the competition. In the end, the Choir received the second-place award, but many eyes had been opened to the quality of music being performed by this little-known choir from the western mountains.

sound to travel so flawlessly in the building, even without microphones? Perhaps it is the horsehair in the plaster ceiling or the rawhide that lashes together some of the beams in the roof. Maybe it's the domed structure or the building's perfect dimensions. Whatever the reason, the Tabernacle has carried the distinctive sounds of the Choir clearly and faithfully for 150 years, so it is fitting that the Mormon Tabernacle Choir would carry the Tabernacle's name.[8]

Perhaps the most recognizable feature of the Tabernacle is its iconic pipe organ—itself an impressive example of pioneer craftsmanship. It was built by Joseph Harris Ridges, a carpenter and cabinetmaker who was born and raised near an organ factory in England. Suitable timber was located and brought by volunteers from the Parowan and Pine Valley mountains, 250 to 300 miles south of Salt Lake City. In the beginning, the organ was powered by hand-pumped bellows, later by water power, and today by electricity. With improved techniques in organ construction, the organ has been rebuilt and enlarged over the years, but it retains Ridges's original case and 32-foot golden pipes. These pipes, shaped from laminated wedges fit together to form a cylinder, have become a hallmark of the Choir and are the only round wooden pipes of this size in the world.

Today the Tabernacle organ is among the world's largest, comprising 11,623 pipes, arranged in 206 rows (ranks)

JOHN J. MCCLELLAN was appointed Tabernacle Organist and served until his death in 1925.

MARCH 1908: DAVID A. SMITH, an experienced leader in the LDS Church was appointed the first president of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. The focus of the president at this time seems to have been finances, with public relations a secondary responsibility. He served until 1938.

SEPTEMBER 1, 1910: The Choir made their first recording, singing "Let the Mountains Shout for Joy," "Hallelujah Chorus," and seven other pieces, conducted by Evan Stephens. The recording for Columbia Phonograph Company—which also included three organ solos by John J. McClellan and one by Joseph J. Daynes—was accomplished acoustically using a specially designed 100-lb. "portable" recording machine sent to Salt Lake City by train from New York.

1900 1905 1908 1909 1910 1911

OCTOBER 5, 1905: EDWARD P. KIMBALL was appointed a Tabernacle Organist, and served until 1937. He is the composer of several hymns, including "The Wintry Day."

TRACY Y. CANNON was appointed assistant Tabernacle Organist in 1909 and served until 1930. He was a talented organist and an able composer, authoring the music and sometimes the words for seven hymns in the current hymnal.

The Choir sang at the White House for President and Mrs. William Howard Taft, their first Washington, DC performance for a president of the US. They sang for a total of eleven US presidents by 2017.

of voices, and controlled by 5 manuals, or keyboards. The Organ Historical Society has recognized it as "an instrument of exceptional historic merit," though millions of people around the world recognize it simply as a symbol of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.[9]

Touring and Broadcasting Begin

The Choir made its first official out-of-town venture in 1880 to American Fork, a two-hour train trip south. Other trips around territorial Utah during the 1880s included a visit to the Utah Penitentiary, where prisoners were allowed to take part in the program. Indeed, some of them were former Choir members incarcerated for practicing polygamy.

In 1893 the Choir stepped onto a larger stage, participating in an eisteddfod, a renowned choral competition, at the World's Columbian Exposition—the Chicago World's Fair. Four hundred Choir members and support personnel traveled to Chicago on a ten-car train for the event. It had been less than fifty years since the Mormon wagon trains made their trek in the opposite direction, and some of those pioneers were now among the singers returning to Illinois.

The music at the competition was not for the faint-hearted: "Worthy Is the Lamb," from Handel's *Messiah;* "Blessed Is the Man Who Fears Him," from Mendelssohn's *Elijah;* and "Now the Impetuous Torrents Rise," from the oratorio *David and Saul*. The Choir took second place to a choir from Scranton, Pennsylvania, although the judges admitted, "It was in reality very difficult to determine who

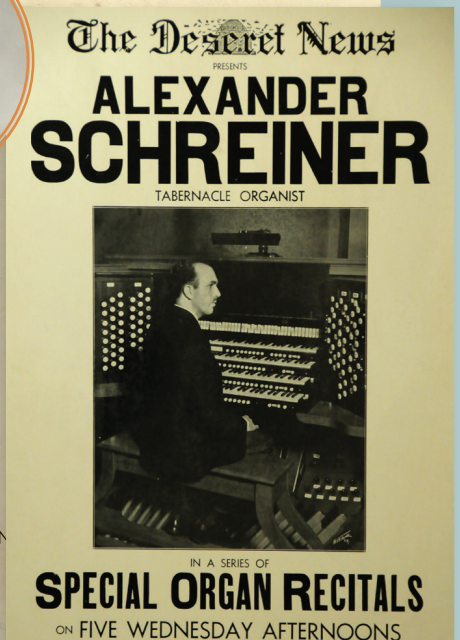
The soundwaves from the Choir or organ were focused into two receiving horns that caused a flexible diaphragm to vibrate, and that in turn moved a needle against a rotating warm wax disc. It was still basically Thomas Edison's original 1877 technology. This recording of the "Hallelujah Chorus" was likely the first outside of England.

APRIL 6, 1922: LDS General Conference, beginning on Thursday, April 6, and continuing on Friday and Sunday, was first broadcast over the airwaves to the Assembly Hall on Temple Square and also over loudspeakers on the temple grounds.

APRIL 27, 1924: **FRANK W. ASPER** was appointed a Tabernacle organist and served until 1965. He is the composer of the music for six hymns and the words as well as music for one more hymn in the current hymnal.

1916 | 1920 | 1922 | 1924

JULY 28, 1916: **ANTHONY C. LUND**, a music teacher and conductor at Brigham Young University, was appointed Choir director and served for nineteen years until his death in 1935.



ALEXANDER SCHREINER became a part-time Tabernacle Organist, performing on Temple Square primarily during the summer months until 1939. Schreiner was born in Nuremberg, Germany, on July 31, 1901. His family immigrated to the United States in 1912, and he became a US citizen in 1920. Among the hymns he composed are "While of These Emblems We Partake" and "God Loved Us So He Sent His Son."

were the victors, the Scranton or the Tabernacle singers, the contestants being so nearly equal, and the degree of excellence with each on all points being of such a high standard." The runners-up were not disheartened, feeling "that in a contest of such magnitude, to be almost if not equal to the best talent the country could produce, was something for the West to be proud of."[10]

Over the next few years, the Choir performed in Denver (1896), the San Francisco World's Fair (1902), the Yukon Exposition in Seattle (1909), and New York and Brooklyn (1911). But nationwide exposure reached a turning point on July 15, 1929, the date of the Choir's first radio broadcast. By today's standards, it was a low-tech production: young Ted Kimball, the organist's son, climbed a 15-foot ladder, holding a single microphone to capture the sound; a technician stood on the basement stairs so he could see both the Choir and the radio operator; a block away, the audio engineer cued NBC headquarters in New York by telegraph; and *Music and the Spoken Word* was born. Thirty radio stations received that first transmission. NBC president M. H. Aylsworth wired congratulations: "Your wonderful Tabernacle program is making great impression in New York. Have heard from leading ministers. All impressed by the program. Eagerly awaiting your next."[11]

Richard L. Evans speaks from the pulpit, circa 1930.

NOVEMBER 1924: The Church began a Sunday evening broadcast of a sermon and sacred music that aired on Salt Lake City radio station KFPT, which was a predecessor to KSL radio. The program was an hour in length. KSL had only one microphone, so it was hand-carried from a block away to the Tabernacle where it was held Statue-of-Liberty style by a technician.

JUNE 1930: RICHARD L. EVANS, a 24-year-old employee of KSL, became the announcer or master of ceremonies for the weekly NBC broadcast. The Monday afternoon program did not yet include a spoken sermon, however.

SEPTEMBER 4, 1932: Radio station KSL broadcast the Choir on Sunday mornings at 10am for the first time on the CBS network. The sixty-minute program was entitled "The Hour Harmonious." This name continued to be used until 1938.

1924 1925 1929 1930 1931 1932

SEPTEMBER 27, 1925: The Choir made its first electrically assisted recording (in other words, using a microphone). The front side of the 10" 78 rpm recording on the Victor label was "Devotion," a classical adaptation, and the reverse side was "By the Waters of Minnetonka." The label on the record is unique as it used the phrase "Mormon Tabernacle Choir" for perhaps the first time in an official or commercial format.

JULY 15, 1929: On this Monday afternoon at 3pm MST the first nationwide live broadcast of the Tabernacle Choir took place on the NBC Radio Blue Network. The half-hour program consisted of six selections, three sung by the Choir under the direction of Anthony C. Lund, and three organ numbers. The program was sent over telephone lines to station WJZ in New York and then rebroadcast to the network of 30 stations, including KSL. The KSL signal at that time was 5,000 kilowatts on AM frequency 1130.

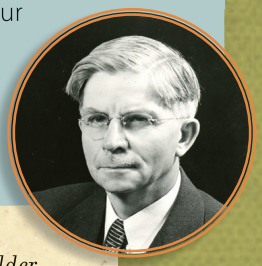
OCTOBER 1, 1931: The first motion picture to use the Choir as part of its musical score was *Corianton: A Story of Unholy Love*. This ambitious film's lead character was the wayward son of Alma the Younger, the Book of Mormon prophet.

Well, what came "next" was 88 years (and counting) of *Music and the Spoken Word,* the longest continuous network program in US broadcast history. What began with the most rudimentary technology is today a state-of-the-art operation, carrying the program to the world on radio, television, cable, the Internet, and YouTube. No other American broadcast has touched so many lives for so long.[12] One example of the thousands of letters received by the Choir over the decades—this from a listener in Columbus, Ohio—illustrates the program's impact: "I have been watching your beautiful program for many years now and I want you to know how much I depend on your weekly program. I don't think I could get through the week without it! I always feel better about life after watching it. I feel God's love in your program. The music and the message are so inspiring! Keep up the good work…we love you all!"

Music and the Spoken Word was inducted into the National Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame in 2004, joining such legends as Bob Hope, Edward R. Murrow, Bing Crosby, Paul Harvey, and Oprah Winfrey. The broadcast was inducted into the National Radio Hall of Fame in 2010. Other awards and honors given to the Choir include the Peabody Award (1944, 1962), a Grammy for "Battle Hymn of the Republic" (1959), the Freedoms Foundation's George Washington Honor Medal (1981), two Emmy Awards (1987, 2013), the National Medal of Arts (2003), the Library of Congress's National Recording Registry (2004) for the Choir's 1958 recording of *Messiah*, and the

AUGUST 23, 1935:
J. SPENCER CORNWALL was called as music director of the Choir, and served for 22 years until 1957. He led the Choir on their first overseas tour to Europe in 1955.

Choir at Boulder Dam, July 29, 1935



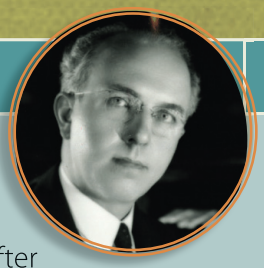
FEBRUARY 1938: LESTER F. HEWLETT, a Salt Lake City businessman, was appointed president of the Choir. He served for 24 years.

MARCH 1938: A radio control booth was built in the Tabernacle and a recording device was acquired. This allowed the technicians and Choir leaders to make important improvements to the broadcast and recorded sound of the Choir, as previously all of this was done off-site at the KSL studio, a clear disadvantage.

1935 1936 1938 1939 1940

AUGUST 30, 1936: The Choir broadcast on CBS Radio was moved to 9:30am, to the half-hour length that still exists today.

OCTOBER 6, 1936:
RICHARD L. EVANS' introduction to the Sunday morning Choir broadcast began with the words, "Sunday morning on Temple Square in Salt Lake City finds us gathered once more within the shadows of the everlasting hills . . . We welcome you to the crossroads of the West." These phrases have persisted in use in various familiar combinations for more than eighty years.



1939: ALEXANDER SCHREINER became the full-time Tabernacle organist after a stellar musical education in Utah and then in Europe, followed by extensive recital experience all around the US. He was considered one of the two or three finest organists in this country. He served as organist for the Choir until 1977 and wrote the music for nine hymns in the current hymnal.

Mother Teresa Award (2006). The Choir's recordings regularly top the Billboard charts and include multiple gold and platinum records.

As its worldwide reach expanded through weekly broadcasts, the Choir continued to tour nationally and began to tour internationally, allowing more people to hear Choir performances in person. The first international tour, in 1955, included performances in Scotland, London, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Berlin, and Paris. Subsequent tours have taken the Choir (along with orchestra members and support staff—a small army of over 500) to the finest music halls in the world, from Jerusalem to Sydney, Mexico City to Budapest, Moscow to São Paulo, and Vienna to Tokyo. Domestically, they have been on stage at the Boston Esplanade, the Hollywood Bowl, Carnegie Hall, Wolf Trap, Red Rocks, Chautauqua, Tanglewood and Mount Rushmore, to name just a few. The Choir's largest audience for a single performance came during the opening ceremonies of the 2002 Winter Olympics, when 3.5 billion people watched as highly acclaimed conductor and composer John Williams directed the Choir. Williams commented later: "I think the Mormon Tabernacle Choir has a glow about it, an inspirational glow. They enjoy making music that is not commercially driven in any way. It's not a job with them; it's a mission."[13]

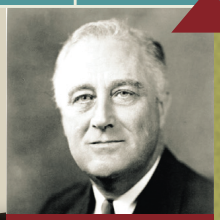
JANUARY 1940: The Tabernacle Choir and organ privately recorded several selections of music, both religious and secular, for the first-ever demonstration of stereophonic sound. LDS scientist Harvey Fletcher, who often consulted on the Choir's sound at the Tabernacle, demonstrated his new technology at Carnegie Hall in New York City on April 9, 1940, creating both excitement and consternation in the music world.

OCTOBER 1949 CONFERENCE REPORT: *"I am also pleased to announce that for the first time in the history of the Church, sessions of this conference will be broadcast upon the air by television over the Salt Lake area and certain areas adjacent thereto," —President George Albert Smith*

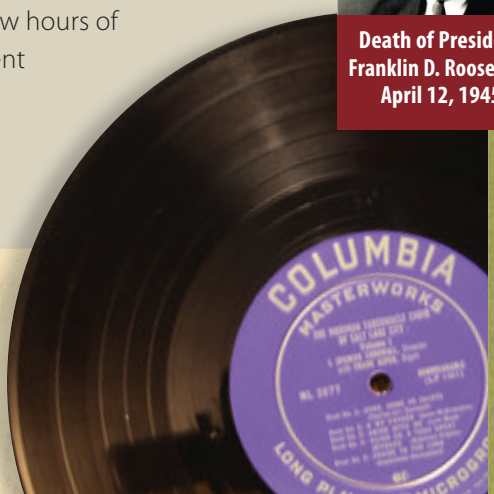
JUNE 1, 1949: KSL began broadcasting a television signal, which was known as Channel 5 and was a CBS affiliate. At that time, KSL Radio and KSL Television were owned by the *Deseret News*, the LDS Church-owned daily newspaper. The Choir's weekly programs did not go live on television until 1962.

1940 1945 1949

As the nation mourned the passing of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Choir gathered and, over the 143 stations of the CBS Radio Network, sang in his honor within a few hours of the announcement of his death.



Death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt: April 12, 1945



OCTOBER 24, 1949: Columbia Records released the first Choir album, *The Mormon Tabernacle Choir of Salt Lake City—Volume 1*, to commemorate twenty years of the radio broadcast. This album was pressed on four 12-inch 78rpm discs, and four 7-inch 45rpm discs, as well as on one ten-inch 33-1/3rpm LP, the Choir's first LP recording.

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir has performed for ten presidents of the United States, including performances at five presidential inaugurations. It was President Ronald Reagan who first referred to the Choir as "America's Choir." He would go on to say, "At my first inauguration as president of the United States, I wanted very much to reignite the fires of liberty and re-inspire the American spirit. And no one sings the anthems of America quite like the Mormon Tabernacle Choir." Reagan continued, "The Choir's singing was a highlight of our inauguration, as we knew it would be. I'm sure I speak for all Americans when I say thank you for saying so well what all of us feel about this land of the free and home of the brave. There is no more inspirational moment for any American—and that includes Ronald Reagan—than to hear the Mormon Tabernacle Choir sing 'Glory, glory, hallelujah, / His truth is marching on.'"[14]

The publication *American Organist* has reflected, "The Tabernacle Choir has performed for royalty and heads of state from the world over, but never has it lost the common touch, the ability to stir the hearts of all mankind as it lifts its collective voices in singing of the values we all cherish and in praising the God who created us all."[15]

Left: "Look Back: Mormon Tabernacle Choir tour Europe in 1955," The Salt Lake Tribune, *August 24, 2012.*

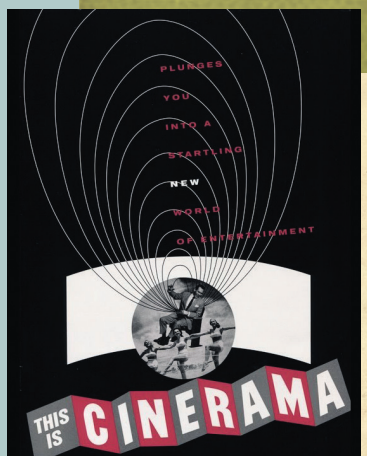
The Choir shown on a dock at Greenook, Scotland, August 19, 1955. J. Spencer Cornwall conducts the choir.

AUGUST 10, 1955: The Choir left Salt Lake City for a historic six-week tour of Europe, singing in a variety of venues in Scotland, Wales, England, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, West Berlin, West Germany, and France. The tour included performing at the groundbreaking for the London Temple on August 27, and dedication of the Swiss Temple, the first LDS temple in Europe, on September 11-15. The last concert was in Paris, where demand for seating so far exceeded available space that the entire two-hour concert was carried live on French radio.

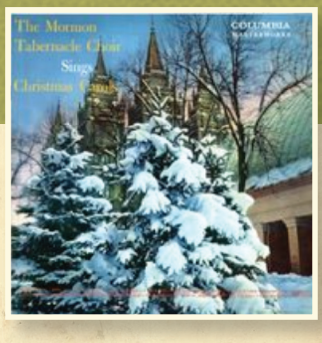
SEPTEMBER 15, 1957: RICHARD P. CONDIE was called to be the Choir director. He held the position for 17 years, until 1974. He was an accomplished vocalist and a member of the Choir, and had been a member of the music faculty at the University of Utah.

1952 1955 1957

1952: Over forty million people worldwide heard the Choir sing as a result of its contribution to the musical score of the groundbreaking motion picture "This Is Cinerama." In the last half of the two-hour film, the Choir, although unseen, sings "America the Beautiful," "Come, Come Ye Saints," and the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Interestingly, the Tabernacle Choir received slight credit for their performances, and even *Time* magazine referred to them as the "background choir" when it reported that President Eisenhower sang out loud along with the Choir at a private screening at a Washington, DC theater. In the official world premiere program the Choir is identified as the **"SALT LAKE CITY TABERNACLE CHOIR."**



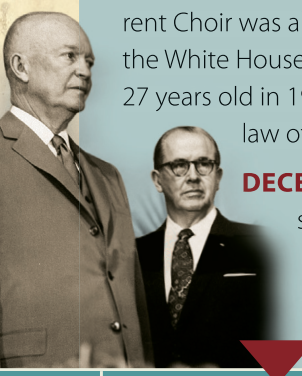
1957: The Choir's first album of Christmas music, titled *The Mormon Tabernacle Choir Sings Christmas Carols,* was released on the Columbia Masterworks label. It was re-recorded and released again in 1965.



Till We Meet Again

And yet beyond the tours and recordings, the awards and the accolades, the real history of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir lies in the volunteer singers themselves. No matter how well known the Choir may become around the world, it will always be composed of individuals—thousands of them over the years—who still "make the air with music ring." In that sense, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir continues to be a Choir of pioneers, making music that is, in some ways, as unique in today's world as it was in the western frontier of the 1850s. All who associate with the Choir—and most who hear the Choir perform—know full well that its mission is about far more than beautiful music or exemplary expression and tonality. Its singers see themselves as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. Their mission is to share His love, His truths, and His Spirit with all who listen.

In 1974 Richard Condie concluded his seventeen-year tenure as conductor of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir with a simple gesture. At the end of his final *Music and the Spoken Word* broadcast, he gave the Choir the downbeat for the final song and then, with no fanfare, simply set down his baton, and stepped down from the podium as the Choir went on singing. Since that day, the director at the conclusion of every performance has set down his baton, turned to the audience, and joined the Choir in singing those poignant words, "God be with you till we meet again."[16]



OCTOBER 26, 1958: The Choir sang at the White House in a concert for President Eisenhower arranged by Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson. It was noted by the *Chicago Tribune* in an article on November 7, 1958, that one member of the current Choir was also present in 1911 when the Choir first sang at the White House—Mrs. Evangeline Thomas Beesley, who was 27 years old in 1911, and 74 in 1958. She was the daughter-in-law of former Choir director Ebenezer Beesley.

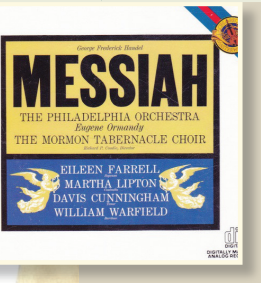
DECEMBER 21, 1958: The Choir's first television special, *Christmas with the Tabernacle Choir,* was a thirty-minute program broadcast on CBS Television.

Assassination of President John F. Kennedy: November 22, 1963

NOVEMBER 24, 1963: CBS asked the Choir to perform on this Sunday morning for ninety minutes instead of the usual thirty to console the nation after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The broadcast was unfortunately interrupted after about forty-five minutes because of the shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald, Kennedy's alleged assassin.

JANUARY 20, 1965: The first performance by the Choir at a presidential inauguration was for President Lyndon B. Johnson.

1958 1959 1962 1963 1965



FALL, 1959: The Mormon Tabernacle Choir's first recording of Handel's *Messiah* was released on LP by Columbia Records. This performance was recorded with the Philadelphia Orchestra under the direction of Eugene Ormandy during the Choir's 1958 eastern tour.

NOVEMBER 29, 1959: The Choir and conductor Richard P. Condie won a Grammy Award for Best Performance by a Vocal Group or Chorus for "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" from the stereo album *The Lord's Prayer.* The Choir sang the winning hymn live from NBC Studios in Burbank, California, on the nationally televised Grammy Awards Show.

1962: Isaac (Ike) Stewart became president of the Choir. He served until 1975.

JULY 23, 1962: The first Choir performance over satellite took place as part of a multi-network television special using the new Telstar communications satellite. The Choir's live performance originated from a dramatic setting in front of Mt. Rushmore, South Dakota, at 7am MST, and was broadcast over the Eurovision Network in Europe as well as on all three major US networks. It is estimated that the program reached the largest single television audience in history to that date.

OCTOBER 14, 1962: The first televised broadcast of *Music and the Spoken Word* took place.

This song, which continues to be the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's signature signoff, is a fitting expression of the Choir's mission: "We hope we have helped you feel a little bit closer to God today, and we hope that feeling can continue in your heart until we have a chance to sing to you again." And when that time comes, millions of listeners around the world know that the Mormon Tabernacle Choir will be there—in the historic Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, on a concert stage in some distant location in the world, or online through the miracle of broadcasting and live-streaming—week after week, year after year, over the miles and across the oceans, inviting a bit of heaven into our lives "till we meet again." ■

1 "Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns,* no. 30.

2 Ronald D. Dennis, "John Parry and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir," Welsh Mormon History, Center for Family History, Brigham Young University.

3 Ibid.

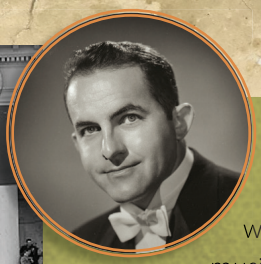
4 Ibid.

5 *Journal of Rudolph Friederich Kurz: An Account of His Experiences Among Fur Traders and America's Indians on the Mississippi and the Upper Missouri Rivers during the Years 1846–1852,* ed. J.N.B. Hewitt (1970), 12.

6 Other conductors in the early days included Stephen Goddard (choir leader from Nauvoo), James Smithies, Charles John Thomas, Robert Sands, Ebenezer Beesley (Choir conductor from 1860–89), Evan Stephens (1889–1916), Anthony C. Lund (1916–35), J. Spencer Cornwall (1935–57), Richard P. Condie

1965: ROBERT M. CUNDICK was appointed a Tabernacle organist and served for twenty-six years until 1991. Cundick wrote the music for two hymns in the current hymnal.

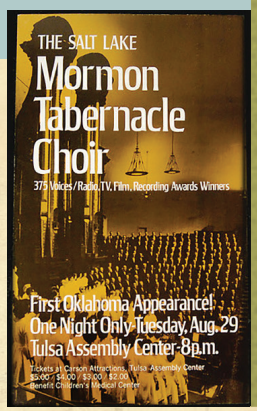
The Choir has sung at six additional presidential inaugurations since President Johnson's.



JUNE 16, 1974: JAY E. WELCH was named the Choir musical director. He had been the conductor of the Mormon Youth Symphony and Chorus, and a member of the University of Utah faculty—a position to which he returned.

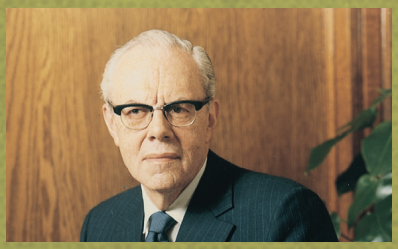
1967 1971 1972 1974

SEPTEMBER 1967: First television broadcast of the Choir in color.



1967 Choir poster for Tulsa, Oklahoma

NOVEMBER 1, 1971: Richard L. Evans, an Apostle and the only permanent voice *Music and the Spoken Word* had ever known, passed away unexpectedly.



FEBRUARY 20, 1972: J. SPENCER KINARD was named the new voice of *Music and the Spoken Word.*

(1957–74), Jay E. Welch (1974), Jerold D. Ottley (1975–98), Craig Jessop (1999–2008), and Mack Wilberg (2008–present). Compositions by several of these conductors are included in the Church's current hymnal.

7 When necessary to accommodate larger audiences, the Choir also performs in the Conference Center, a 22,000-seat facility north of Temple Square, dedicated in 2000. For example, the Choir's annual Christmas concerts and its weekly *Music and the Spoken Word* broadcasts during the summer months originate from the Conference Center.

8 Originally the Choir occupied seating at the same elevation as the audience separated only by a railing. The steep choir loft, so recognizable today, was added to the Tabernacle years later in 1891, as were lights and heat. In 2005, the Tabernacle was closed for more than two years of extensive renovations that greatly increased its ability to withstand earthquakes. At completion, Choir offices moved into new quarters on the lower level and new dressing rooms, a recording studio, and an updated library were added. The building was given a sparkling new aluminum roof, the interior balcony was rebuilt, and new benches replaced the originals. Tabernacle seating now accommodates about 3,000, although the benches are still wood and they are still hard. But the pioneer spirit still rings each week as people from all over the world enter and enjoy the music of the Choir.

9 Tabernacle organists have included Joseph Daynes, John J. McClellan, Tracy Cannon, Frank Asper, Alexander Schreiner, Robert Cundick, John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, Linda Margetts, and Andrew Unsworth.

10 E. A. McDaniel, *Utah at the World's Columbian Exposition* (1894), digitized; Brigham Young University-Idaho, David O. McKay Library, 14

11 As quoted in Heidi Swinton, *America's Choir* (2004), 104.

12 Each week Music and the Spoken Word includes five or six songs from the Choir, an organ solo, and a three-minute nondenominational inspirational message. Over the program's 88-year history, three announcers have stood at the microphone to narrate: Richard L. Evans (1930–71), J. Spencer Kinard (1972–90), and Lloyd D. Newell (1990–present).

13 As quoted in Swinton, 3.

14 As quoted in "Where Does the Title America's Choir Come From?" *Mormon Tabernacle Choir,* online.

15 The Salt Lake Mormon Tabernacle Choir," *The American Organist* (Dec. 1988), 62.

16 "God Be with You Till We Meet Again," *Hymns,* no. 152.

RENOWNED TABERNACLE CHOIR SOLOIST:

Ewan Harbrecht Mitton

by Kent Lott, *Pioneer* Editorial Board

The Tabernacle Choir first traveled to Europe on a seven-week concert tour in 1955. At the invitation of J. Spencer Cornwall, operatic star and concert soprano Ewan Harbrecht accompanied the Choir as guest soloist.

A California native and devoted member of the Church, Ewan was the daughter of Peter and Elizabeth Harbrecht. She was a child prodigy and had begun her professional singing career at age twelve. Her principal teacher was Ruth Miller Chamlee of Hollywood, California, a noted soprano of the Metropolitan Opera. But during her teens and early twenties Ewan had also received training in Milan, London, Paris, and New York. She made her European debut at the Teatro Nuovo in Milan, then sang six years under Columbia Artists Management of New York, performing solo recitals in many parts of the United States and Canada.

As featured soloist with the Choir during its 1955 tour, Ewan felt obliged to spend long hours in preparation. She later wrote that as she reviewed her repertoire of religious

Ewan with Choir members in London.

Choir performance at the Grosse Tonhalle in Zurich, Switzerland (photo by Van Dermeer, Life *Magazine).*

music, she was "astounded that they [the Choir] wanted me to sing so much" because "they hardly ever used soloists." She also learned from Cornwall that, before their early-August departure, "every one of us would be set apart by the Presidency of the Church to be missionaries."

The Choir traveled by train to Montreal, Canada, where they boarded the *Saxonia* bound for Greenock, Scotland, arriving on August 19. When they disembarked at Greenock, the Choir was thrilled to see President David O. McKay waiting to greet them. Ewan wrote, " I will never forget the thrill of seeing that statuesque, regal man with his white hair that seemed to clear the fog and light up the dock. What a wonderful surprise for us all."

In the United Kingdom, the Choir presented concerts in Glasgow, Scotland; Manchester and London, England; and Cardiff, Wales. Their concerts on the Continent were in Copenhagen, Denmark; Wiesbaden and Berlin, Germany; Amsterdam and Scheveningen, the Netherlands; Bern and Zurich, Switzerland; and Paris, France.

During the 1955 tour, the Bern Switzerland Temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was dedicated by President McKay—the first temple outside the US and Canada. The Choir and Ewan Harbrecht performed at the dedication, and at President McKay's request, Ewan sang "Bless This House," a popular art song of the time. President McKay helped revise the song's lyrics so they would be fully appropriate for a temple dedication. Ewan later sang similar arrangements of "Bless This House" at the dedications of the Los Angeles and Oakland California Temples.

Of the Bern Temple dedication, Ewan wrote, "Yes, it is a great blessing to those Saints in Europe. The Choir sang 'Holiness Becometh the House of the Lord' and all of us had red eyes from that spiritual experience [because] we heard angels singing with us. Apostle Benson [Ezra Taft Benson] spoke, very well, about the wars in Europe, the strife and terrible things they went through, and ended hoping the Temple will radiate a 'Peace' from it to all the nations of Europe, [that] all will know of [its] significance, and [that] it will help to maintain peace through righteousness."

The Choir's last concert was in Paris, France. A fitting ending to this tour was a historic photograph of the Choir in

Final concert of the European Concert Tour was held at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, France. Choir members pose outside the Palais with the Eiffel Tower in the background (Ewan is in front of the Choir).

Reception at Copenhagen; Ewan with Spencer Cornwall (above left) and with Tabernacle organist Alexander Schreiner (above right).

Left: After Paris concert, Ewan with Lester F. Hewlett (Choir president) and his wife Margaret, Mary Jack (Choir secretary), T. A. Clawson (physician), and Elder Ezra Taft Benson and Flora Benson.

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
THE COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE
47 E. SOUTH TEMPLE STREET
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

November 22, 1955

Miss Ewan Harbrecht
800 North Fuller
Hollywood 46, California

Dear Sister Harbrecht:

The weeks since we returned from Europe have been weeks of pressure for us, and perhaps for you also--but we do not wish to let more time go by without expressing appreciation to you for your distinctive contribution to the Tabernacle Choir's European Tour.

It was good to have you with us; good to hear you sing, and to have you there to perform the other services which you did so willingly from time to time, including the press conferences and public receptions.

It was a source of sincere satisfaction to us, and it must have been to you, to feel the audiences respond to your sincere singing, as you appeared and performed in your lovely white evening gown.

Thank you for all you did--and we wish for you joyous and successful years ahead, and a rich fullness of life in all that matters most.

With appreciation and every good wish for this day--and always.

Sincerely,

RICHARD L. EVANS

RLE:bh

Letter from Richard L. Evans to Ewan after the Europe tour.

During the mid-1950s United Airlines Flight 409 was a daily flight from Denver, Colorado, to Salt Lake City, Utah. On October 6, 1955, Flight 409—a Douglas DC-4 propliner[1]—crashed into Medicine Bow Peak near Centennial, Wyoming, killing all 66 people on board (63 passengers, 3 crew members). The victims included five women members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir returning from the European tour and a number of military personnel.[2] Ewan Harbrecht was originally scheduled to be on this flight.

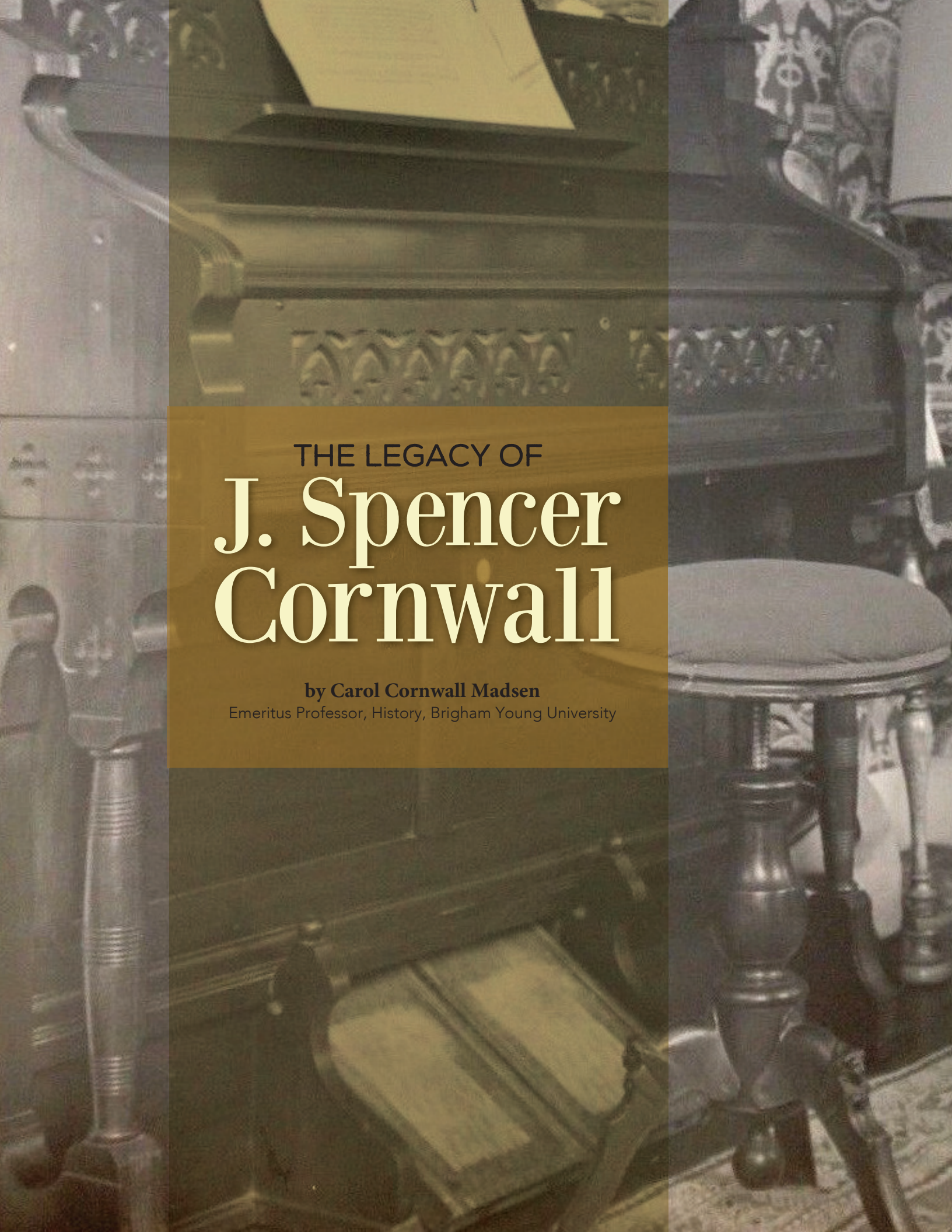
1 *"FAA Registry," Federal Aviation Administration.*

2 *"Disasters: Waiting Room,"* Time, *17 Oct 1955.*

front of the Eiffel Tower. On July 15, 2016, the Choir ended another European tour by re-creating the earlier photo in commemoration of the 1955 tour.

Following the 1955 tour, Ewan Harbrecht continued an illustrious professional career that included leading roles in premiere performances of Jacques Ibert's *Le Roi d'Yvetot,* Stravinsky's *Les Noces,* and Benjamin Britten's *Albert Herring.* She taught vocal music for 24 years at Western Oregon University; following her retirement in 1988, she moved to Provo, Utah, where she organized the *Utah Lyric Opera Society* and maintained a private vocal studio for 27 years. She capped her career with the 2016 publication of her *Authentic Bel Canto* instructional series on classic vocal techniques. Ewan and her husband, George Mitton, have 4 children, 20 grandchildren, and 23 great-grandchildren.

Biographical information and images courtesy John Mitton. Selected recordings of Ewan's performances during the 1955 tour are available online at www.ewanmitton.org *(click on "Tabernacle Choir Tour 1955" and then on "Selected Choir Tour Recordings").*



THE LEGACY OF

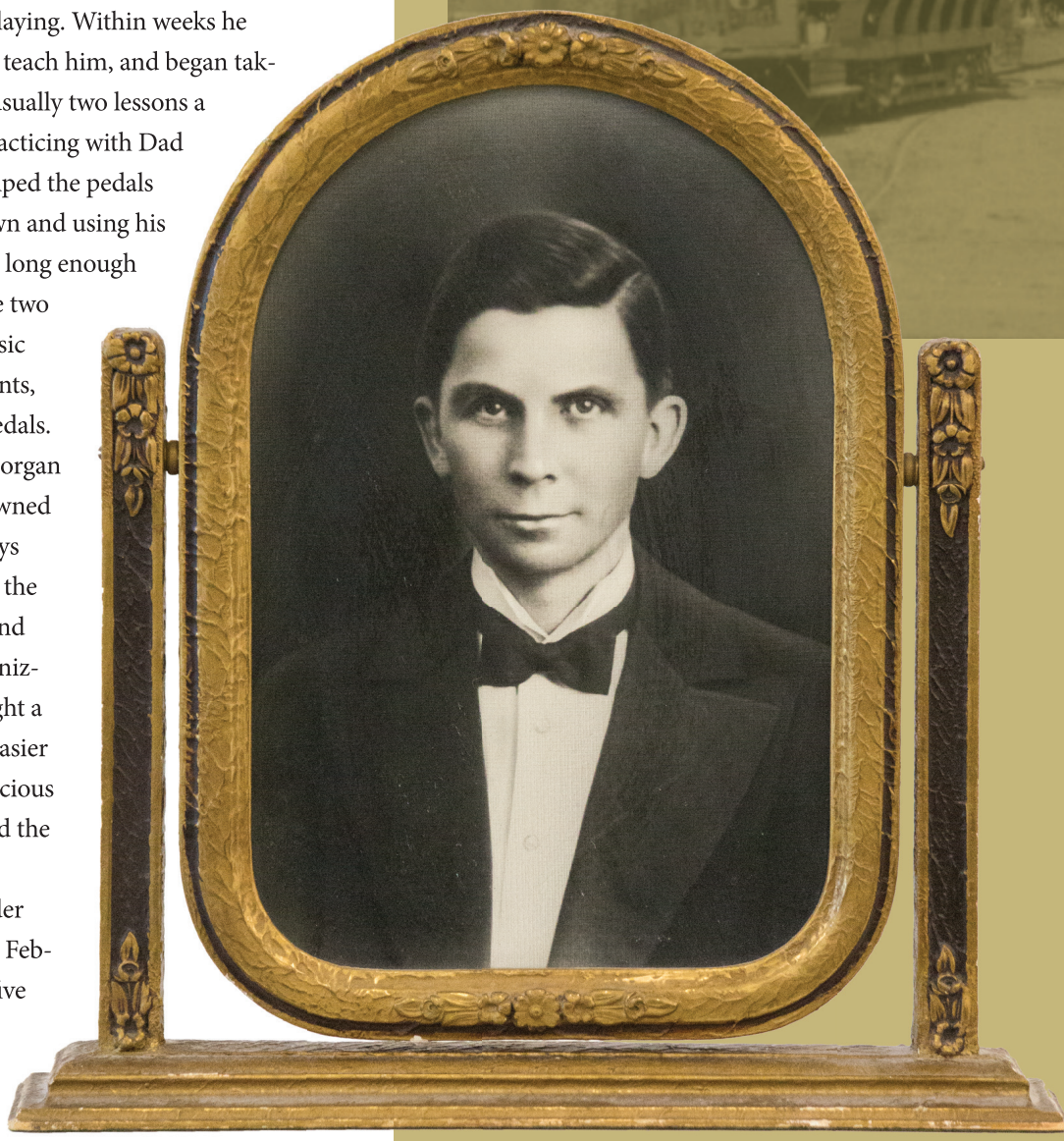
J. Spencer Cornwall

by Carol Cornwall Madsen
Emeritus Professor, History, Brigham Young University

My father, J. Spencer Cornwall, took his first music lesson from a tramp, a homeless itinerant named Tony Lewis—a man who traded work for food and shelter. Tony came to the Joseph A. Cornwall farm in Millcreek, Utah, in 1893, looking for a few days' work, and stayed until he was nearly eighty. He then disappeared just as quietly and strangely as he had appeared.

One day Tony became intrigued with the parlor organ and asked if he could take lessons from Joseph Cornwall's sister, Louetta Hansen, a fine pianist. Joseph and Louetta readily agreed. When Tony came home from one of his lessons, my father, then just five years old, asked him to teach him the songs he was to practice, which Dad learned at first playing. Within weeks he advanced far beyond Tony's ability to teach him, and began taking lessons from Aunt Lou herself—usually two lessons a day because he learned so quickly. Practicing with Dad became a new job for Tony, who pumped the pedals that powered the organ, kneeling down and using his hands, since my father's legs were not long enough to reach the pedals while playing. The two became a popular duo, providing music for many church and community events, Dad at the console and Tony at the pedals. They had to pack up the small parlor organ to take with them since few venues owned such an instrument. "Music was always my first love," Dad told us, "thanks to the mystery man who lived at our farm and became like one of the family." Recognizing Dad's musical gift, his father bought a piano which made practicing much easier for both Dad and Tony. Dad's inauspicious introduction to music hardly presaged the musical career that followed.

Dad was born to Joseph Alexander and Mary Ellen Spencer Cornwall on February 23, 1888. He was the oldest of five



brothers and one sister: Claude C., Ralph, Douglas T., Melvin C., and Lottie H. (West). A brother, Marvin, died at six months while Joseph A. was serving in the Southern States Mission. Dad and his brothers sold eggs and butter from the farm to help support the family in their father's absence.

My Dad attended grammar school in Millcreek and secondary school at the Granite Stake Academy, a school supported by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Dad was the accompanist for most of the singing in these schools. Afterwards he and his brother Claude attended LDS University (now the LDS Business College), and although Dad loved music, at the time he could not envision any kind of substantial career in that field. His plan was to study medicine at the University of Utah, a much more lucrative and steady field of employment. However, before he was able to enroll at the U, he was called by Frank Y. Taylor, President of the Granite Stake, to teach music in Manassa, Colorado, which for several years during the 1880s had been a sanctuary for plural wives. Many LDS families still lived there. So Dad went to Manassa, where he taught singing and organized a band. He also learned much about ensemble music, especially the fact that some instruments play under different key signatures than others—a lesson he learned when his first arrangement for the band produced unplanned dissonance.

When he was released from his mission, he enrolled at the University of Utah to begin his medical studies, studying there for three years. During this time, he was called on by numerous vocal teachers to accompany their students at recitals. Louella Ferrin Sharp was a well-known voice teacher. A young woman from Taylorsville, back home after two years studying at Utah Agricultural College (now Utah State), was one of her pupils. At a rehearsal where Dad was accompanist, the young woman, Mary Alice Haigh, stood to sing. But her voice was thin and raspy, and she could not finish the song. She had tonsillitis. Embarrassed and upset, she began to cry. Recognizing how Mary Alice felt, Dad waited until the rehearsal was over and then volunteered to walk her to the streetcar stop, to which she assented. A mutual attraction began on that memorable day—which led to their marriage on June 11, 1913.

Boy Scout Band on the steps of the Church Administration Building, 1925

That same year, when riding the streetcar home from the University, Dad sat by James E. Moss, one of his former teachers, who told him a music supervisor was needed in the Granite School District. "Boy, what are you doing?" Moss asked him. "Would you like the job?" Newly married, Dad was thrilled to have a job offer. Thus ended his schooling in medicine. He served as music supervisor in the Granite School District for sixteen years.

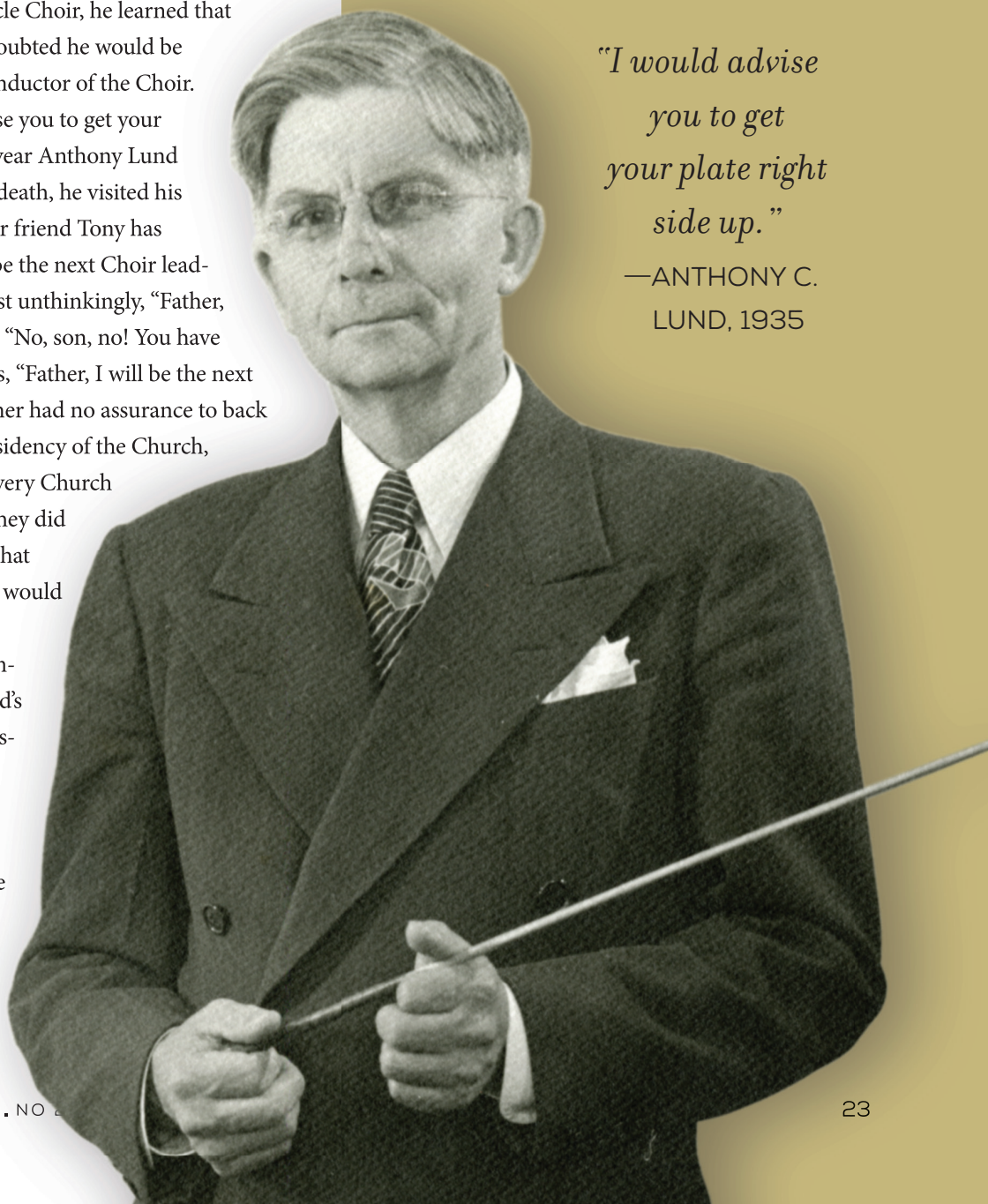
This experience led to an invitation in 1929 to be supervisor of music in the Salt Lake City School District, a position he held for six years. He enjoyed his work with young people and initiated the district's all-school music festivals for students in grades 4 through 12. The festivals were held each year in the Tabernacle, a tradition carried on for many years after Dad left that position.

Dad was a musical entrepreneur. He organized the first Boy Scout Band in Salt Lake City, and as the district supervisor of music, he organized a Salt Lake Music Teachers' Choir. Indeed, wherever he saw an opening for development of vocal talent, he filled it with a variety of choral ensembles: he organized and directed a musical group called The Sewanee Singers, with his wife as soloist, and sister-in-law Cleone as accompanist; directed the Mendelssohn Male Chorus; and

organized and directed a Police Glee Club. For six years he was musical director of the Salt Lake Civic Opera which performed in outdoor venues in the summer and featured some of the brightest musical stars in the city. He was also musical director of the Oratorio Society which performed Handel's *Messiah* each year. Before he became Tabernacle Choir conductor, each Sunday morning for eleven years he drove to Centerville to teach music at the Lund Home for Boys. Many of the youth there became his friends for life.

In the spring of 1935 a new opportunity presented itself to my father. He preserved in writing the event that changed not only his career but his life. In a chance meeting with Anthony C. Lund, conductor of the Tabernacle Choir, he learned that Lund was not well and that Lund doubted he would be able to continue much longer as conductor of the Choir. Then he said to Dad, "I would advise you to get your plate right side up." In June of that year Anthony Lund died. When Dad learned of Lund's death, he visited his father who said, "Well, I see that our friend Tony has passed on. Who do you think will be the next Choir leader?" Dad promptly answered, almost unthinkingly, "Father, I will." His father quickly answered, "No, son, no! You have a good job." Dad repeated his words, "Father, I will be the next Tabernacle Choir Director." My father had no assurance to back his claim. He did not know the Presidency of the Church, except in a general way as almost every Church member knew them. He was sure they did not know him, but, he said, "I had that inexplicable inner conviction that I would be selected to fill the vacancy."

Two months went by with a temporary conductor. Then one day, Dad's father came to see him. "I have a message for you, son," his father said; "it is urgent." He explained that he had visited with some of the leaders of the Church and had talked about the future conductor of the Choir. Then he said, "I want you to forget about being Tabernacle Choir director. Not one of the brethren to whom



"I would advise you to get your plate right side up."

—ANTHONY C. LUND, 1935

I spoke even so much as mentioned your name." Though Dad listened to what his father said, he could not dispel the inner assurance that he would fill that position himself.

Then, on August 23, 1935, a phone call came to my father. "This is President Grant of the Church," the voice said. "Can you come to my office right now?" My dad called my mother, and said, "Well, it has come." Her answer was, "Use wisdom in what you say to him." When he arrived in President Grant's office, the President said, "Last night at our meeting, we elected you to be the next Tabernacle Choir Leader. What have you to say about it?" Despite the inner prompting that he would be called to serve in this position, Dad was overcome. "I had just heard that I was the Tabernacle Choir Conductor," he later wrote. He held the position for more than two decades.

In 1955 he had the privilege of taking the Choir on its first international tour through Europe; the Choir generated accolade after accolade at each concert. After the horrors of World War II, with thousands of displaced persons still seeking family and homes, the hopeful message of the songs the Choir presented resonated with Europe's struggling peoples. Dad's insightful arrangement of "Come, Come, Ye Saints," sensitively matching music to the rallying words of William Clayton, evoked requests at each concert performance for it to be sung again. At one concert it was repeated six times. Most moving to the Choir was a rehearsal performance in Berlin that was opened to refugees, some of whom were LDS members. Everyone wept when the Choir sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

When learning of Dad's release, soon after the European tour, over a hundred members of the Choir came to our home, filling the sidewalks and streets around it and serenading my father. It was a magical moment, drawing all the neighbors to their doors to hear what one neighbor called "angelic voices." Certainly they were angelic to Dad.

Over the years my father studied privately with local musicians including John J. McClellan, Squire Coop, and Hugh Dougall. He also studied with Cyril Graham, and Roland Pease at Northwestern University. He continued his choral training during summer sessions at the Chicago Music College and the Christiansen School of Music in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. He also managed to write three books: *The Fundamentals of Conducting* (three editions); *Stories of Our Mormon Hymns* (three editions); and *A Century of Singing* (after his release).

When the Choir began its national broadcasts, it was inundated with letters from an enormous range of listeners from hundreds of places. For many listeners, it was their Sabbath Day religious service; others tuned in to be uplifted by the Choir's music and the words of Richard L. Evans. Especially dear to the Choir were letters revealing changes that the broadcast had evoked in the lives of individual listeners. Some listeners even became converted to the Church after hearing the broadcasts. Occasionally other choral directors would write Dad to inquire about the music or the voluntary service of Choir members or the logistics of maintaining such a large and professional music ensemble.

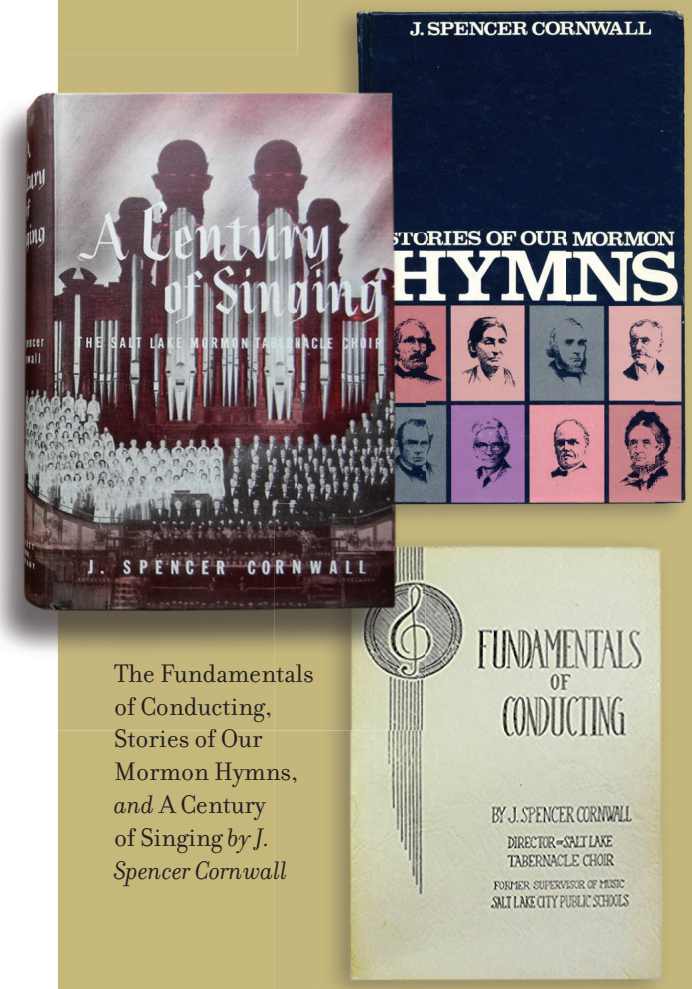
When Dad received one letter with an honest appraisal of the Choir's intonation, a problem that had plagued Choir conductors before him, he was determined to find a way to keep the singers in tune. As the tones of the organ traveled outward to the audience during a matter of a split-second or so, the pitch dropped slightly—and these were the tones the Choir heard and matched their singing to. After many ex-

periments by the Choir's technicians, a microphone was placed within the organ and sixty high-fidelity speakers were installed under sixty of the Choir seats. "The result was phenomenal—the sound coming from under the seats was so good it matched the tone of the organ almost to perfection," Dad happily proclaimed. Organists and singers were pleased, and there were no more critical letters.

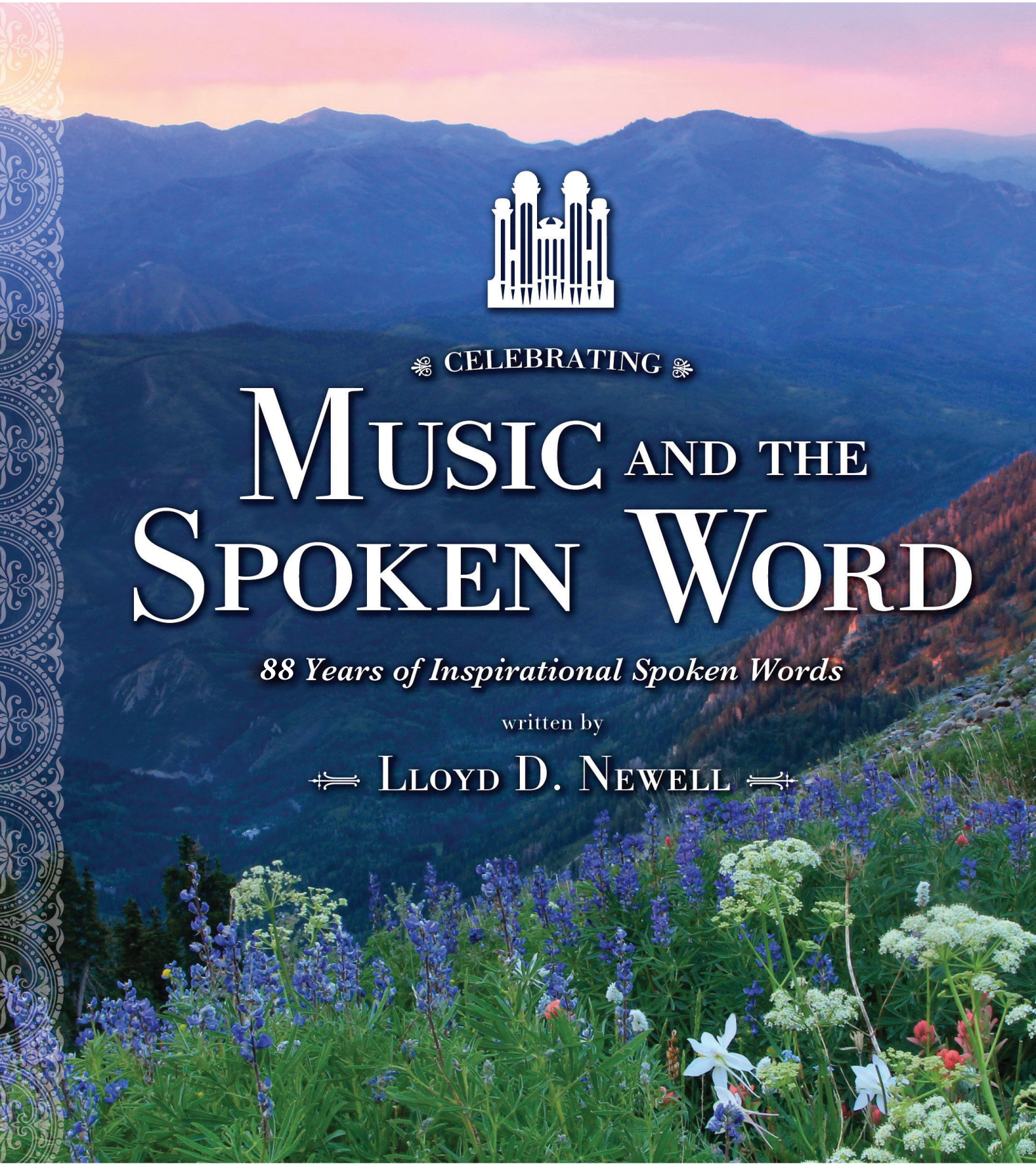
Dad's primary goal for the Choir was to make it equal to the great choral groups of the nation. For Choir performances, he chose the highest quality choral music, selections from operas and cantatas, and special arrangements of our greatest hymns.

In 1979, when the Tabernacle Choir celebrated its fiftieth anniversary of broadcasting on CBS, Dad was invited to attend a special concert in the Tabernacle at which he conducted his popular arrangement of "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Though he was ninety-one years old, when he grasped the baton and began to lead, all the vigor of his natural style took over. Both the Choir and the audience gave him a standing ovation. It was a fitting close to a brilliant career.

In February 1983, my father Spencer Cornwall died at age ninety-five, leaving seven children, twenty–seven grandchildren, numerous great-grandchildren, and hundreds of Choir members to appreciate his legacy. ■



The Fundamentals of Conducting, Stories of Our Mormon Hymns, *and* A Century of Singing *by J. Spencer Cornwall*



CELEBRATING

Music and the Spoken Word

88 Years of Inspirational Spoken Words

written by

Lloyd D. Newell

MAY PEACE BE WITH YOU. . . . THIS DAY AND ALWAYS

by Lloyd D. Newell

The voice of *Music and the Spoken Word,* 1990–present

Many years ago, my mother gave me an old upright Philco radio that she had listened to on the family farm in Idaho. It once belonged to my grandparents and is a cherished family heirloom. It still works, even with antique tubes and wiring. Though it embodies quite a bit of history, its wooden frame is still smooth and mostly unmarked. For me, it is a visual and auditory link to the early years of *Music and the Spoken Word.*

In my mind's eye, I can see my forebears gathered around the radio on a Sunday morning in the 1930s or '40s, tuning in to radio station KSL to hear the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's weekly broadcast. Their tiny farm town was hundreds of miles away from Salt Lake City, so it must have seemed like a miracle that they could hear the Tabernacle Choir in their own living room! Week after week, they looked forward to the program's uplifting music and familiar "From the Crossroads of the West, we welcome you to a program of inspirational music and spoken word. . . ."

Music and the Spoken Word has become the world's longest-running continuous network broadcast and is carried over 2,000 radio and TV stations and cable systems, in addition to a live Internet stream each Sunday morning at 9:30 MT to anyplace in the world. Its remarkable 88-year history reaches back to the very earliest years of broadcasting.

In the 1920s, radio was a new medium that fascinated the public. All across the country, people began to recognize its tremendous possibilities. In 1922, a tiny Utah radio station called KZN—later known as KSL—was launched by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as an offshoot of the Church-owned newspaper, the *Deseret News.* An NBC radio affiliate, KZN broadcast from the roof of a building in downtown Salt Lake City. Its first broadcast—on May 6, 1922—was a message from Church President Heber J. Grant. Within a few years, Latter-day Saints would enjoy the first radio broadcast of LDS general conference, and listeners in Salt Lake City could tune in to Tabernacle Choir rehearsals every Thursday evening.

Sometime in late 1928 or early 1929, KSL station manager Earl J. Glade had a brilliant idea: why not produce a nationwide, weekly broadcast featuring the Mormon Tabernacle Choir? He convinced Church leadership, Choir personnel, and NBC management that it could be done, and on July 15, 1929, the Choir went on the air—live from the Tabernacle—for the first time. The Choir's broadcast was an immediate success, and from that day to the present, the nation has been able to hear the Mormon Tabernacle Choir every week.[1] The New York City *Telegraph* gave this praise: "Somewhere in the world there may be more than one brilliant choral organization other than the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, but there is no broadcasting in America today to equal the one that comes from the air over the National Broadcasting System."[2]

Literally every week since then, *Music and the Spoken Word* has sustained its diverse American audience through war and depression, peace and prosperity. Its inspirational programming has steadied troubled hearts, uplifted believers, brought light and joy into an often

dark world, and led one generation after another to God. And while technology has changed along with life itself, the essence of this broadcast has remained the same, week after week—and it continues to encourage and comfort its audience, guiding them to greater good. In a world of increasing negativism, loud noise, and confusing voices, the Choir's broadcast is a steady anchor of truth and hope.

In 1954, to commemorate the 25th year of *Music and the Spoken Word, Life* magazine commented on the program's legacy with these words: "Those who know this program need no arguments for listening to it. . . . Millions have heard [the Choir], and more millions, we hope, will hear [it] in years to come. It is a national institution to be proud of, but what matters more is that Americans can be linked from ocean to ocean and year to year by the same brief respite from the world's week, and by a great chord of common thoughts on God and love and the everlasting things."[3]

Time and again, the Choir hosts dignitaries or features celebrities on the program; often program guests become nostalgic, sharing that they grew up listening to *Music and the Spoken Word* or describing the Choir as a life-affording American institution. And almost invariably, they say their experience with the Choir has been one of the highlights of their lives. To cite just one example, in December 2002 famed broadcaster Walter Cronkite joined the program as a guest narrator. He spoke to the capacity audience in the Conference Center about fond memories of growing up in Kansas City and listening to Tabernacle Choir broadcasts on an old crystal radio set.

Among all the awards and honors *Music and the Spoken Word* has garnered over the years, and they are many, this may be its most important achievement—its capacity to connect with generation after generation of American individuals. Somehow, the Choir and its music have consistently touched hearts for 88 years and counting.

Utah radio station KZN gave its first broadcast May 6, 1922. Its message was from Church President Heber J. Grant.

I have been involved with the broadcast long enough to get some sense of its enduring legacy. All who have participated in the success of *Music and the Spoken Word* in any way owe unbounded gratitude to the giants who went before. We know we are here only for a season, extending our offering to the Lord and to the world. We each strive to do our best as we contribute to the legacy of *Music and the Spoken Word.*

For me, as the program's announcer, that legacy begins with 19-year-old Ted Kimball. The son of Tabernacle organist Edward P. Kimball, Ted served as the first announcer, filling this role for several months before leaving to serve a full-time Church mission. Then, in June 1930, a 24-year-old announcer from KSL radio, Richard L. Evans, was chosen to replace him. In time he would begin to add short thoughts, called sermonettes, to the weekly program. Just four years

after his first broadcast, he received a national award as the best radio announcer in the country. Perhaps no one has had a greater impact on *Music and the Spoken Word* than Richard L. Evans. He was the broadcast's announcer and writer for 41 years; he also produced the program each week and toured with the Choir. And for more than thirty years during that time, he served as a General Authority of the LDS Church.

After Elder Evans, J. Spencer Kinard spent eighteen years as voice of *Music and the Spoken Word,* and then I was asked by LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley to serve in this assignment. "This calling will change your life," he told me. My first broadcast was on November 25, 1990, the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Now, more than 26 years later, I deeply understand the truth of President Hinckley's words—it has changed my life. It has been a marvelous blessing, a weighty responsibility, and a sacred trust and honor. My life and my family's lives are undeniably better because of it.

President Hinckley said something else that still rings in my mind all these years later. He said with great earnestness, "Each week, your Spoken Word should be an inspirational gem." Every time I prepare a weekly message, I ponder his charge. I ask myself: Is this message inspirational? Does it enlighten and uplift? Does it provide insight or perspective that is wise and interesting and encouraging? I can sincerely say that each message is carefully considered and lovingly written, and each is motivated by a genuine desire to share wisdom and truth, to convey principles that will teach and lift and inspire.

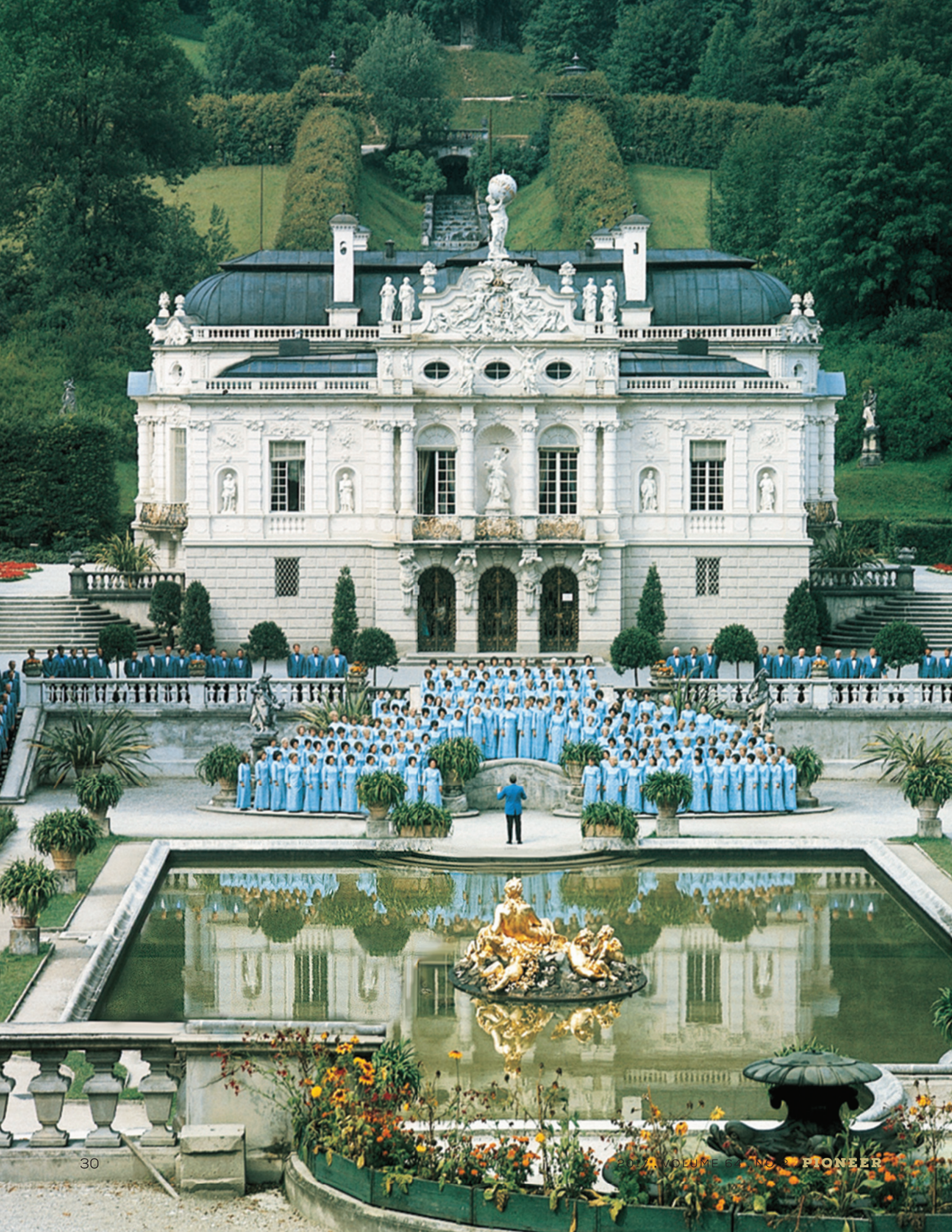
I may be biased, but I believe the Mormon Tabernacle Choir is the greatest choir of all time, and it truly keeps getting better. I cannot express the joy, blessing, comfort, and strengthening influence it has been for me to begin every Sunday morning since 1990 with these dedicated, talented singers at my side. There's nothing like this remarkable Choir or this remarkable broadcast anywhere in the world. The Mormon Tabernacle Choir and *Music and the Spoken Word* are truly incomparable pioneers—in choral music, in broadcasting, and in inspirational programming.

We now approach our ninth decade of broadcasting and we look forward to the future. To all who have made this broadcast possible—from the day it went on the air in 1929 until today—and who have contributed in any way to the success of *Music and the Spoken Word,* and to our audience at home and abroad, I leave you with the same words with which the broadcast concludes each week: "Until we meet again, may peace be with you . . . this day and always."

1 In 1932, at the enticement of CBS founder and broadcast pioneer William S. Paley, the broadcast switched to the CBS Radio Network where it remains today.

2 Quoted in Heidi S. Swinton, *America's Choir* (2004), 102: "The Choir's 300 members practiced for a month before the first live broadcast, holding a final 'radio dress rehearsal' the week before. The chief divisional engineer of NBC called it an 'epic' event, with 10,000 radio fans eagerly awaiting the program. In the early broadcasts, the announcer would aim the one microphone in the direction of whichever section was singing at the moment."

3 Richard L. Evans, *From the Crossroads* (1955), 14.



"What do you do the rest of the week?"

by Jerold Ottley
Mormon Tabernacle Choir Music Director,
December 1974–October 1999

The title of this article comes from the most frustrating question I was asked during my tenure with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Conducting the Choir is far more than thirty minutes of weekly radio and television exposure. Personnel acquisition, management and training, as well as logistics, public relations, and music study are just a few of the activities that consume a music director's time. The symbiotic relationship that existed among the members of the Choir's musical and administrative staffs* during my twenty-five years as music director felt unique in its sociability and teamwork. My article attempts to provide both context for and descriptions of a few of the major developments of this period.

Logically, the modern era of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir can be dated from the first broadcast of *Music and the Spoken Word* in July 1929. This marked a turning point in the Choir's national fame and the beginning of its international reputation. Prior to this recurring broadcast commitment, the Choir had been a local and sometimes intermittent entity, coming together only for a season or a special event. Even though the discipline of the weekly radio broadcast improved musical quality, the operative procedures of the Choir were not clearly defined. The supportive organization behind the Choir had been, at best, ad hoc. There was no handbook of procedures. Problems, opportunities, and expectations were dealt with on an "as needed" basis. Major decisions were the province of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or their assigned representatives, but day-to-day operations were influenced by varied streams of pressure and influence from within and without the Church.

President Spencer W. Kimball began a restructuring of the Choir in June 1974 when he appointed Jay E. Welch as the music director of the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Orchestra and Chorus. Robert C. Bowden and I were called as his associates. Brother Bowden was to assist with the Mormon Youth organization and I with the Tabernacle Choir. Brother Welch began to make changes on several fronts, including the employment of a full-time secretary, the first full-time member of the Choir's administrative staff. Everything to this point had been accomplished with part-time or volunteer staff.

However, the pace of change was slowed by preparations for the Choir's September 1974 tour to the Washington, DC Temple open house. Then, in November, Mormon Youth was removed from the Choir organization and given

its own president with Robert C. Bowden as music director. Brother Welch's unexpected resignation in early December understandably left many projects in limbo. When I was appointed acting music director a few days later, the First Presidency declared a hiatus on all reorganization until I was called as music director during the April 1975 General Conference. With the appointment of Oakley E. Evans as Choir president in September 1975, President Kimball renewed efforts to stabilize the Choir through defined membership, attendance, and retirement policies. The developments that followed were gradual and overlapping. For these reasons this account is not strictly chronological.

One of President Kimball's early requests was that President Evans define the process through which bishops' worthiness recommendations for both current and prospective Choir members would be regularly received. The resulting standards required bishops to verify that a Choir member was living worthy of a temple recommend, whether or not one was held. The standards also included proper attention to family responsibilities and demonstrable activity in the member's home ward. It had been observed that in the past some Choir members' only activity in the Church had been with the Tabernacle Choir. The revised standards became a high priority for both new and continuing membership.

1975: OAKLEY S. EVANS, a prominent retail executive, was appointed president of the Choir.

1977: JOHN LONGHURST became a Tabernacle Organist and continued until 2007. He wrote the music for the favorite LDS hymn, "I Believe in Christ."

DECEMBER 23, 1977: The Tabernacle Choir appeared on ABC-TV's *Donny and Marie Christmas Show,* singing two numbers, including "Silent Night" to close the show. Their performance had been taped at the Tabernacle on December 3.

1979: BONNIE GOODLIFFE became a Temple Square Organist and continues to serve today in 2017.

1974 1975 1977 1979 1981

DECEMBER 18, 1974: JEROLD OTTLEY began serving as the Choir musical director and would continue for twenty-five years until 1999. He had been a member of the music faculty at the University of Utah.

JANUARY 20, 1981: The Choir sang at President Ronald Reagan's first inauguration. Seated on two large floats in the inauguration parade, the Choir stopped in front of the president's reviewing stand and sang the iconic "Battle Hymn of the Republic" that left many in the stands wiping a tear from their eyes, including the president. Following this event, it is reported that the number of broadcast stations carrying the Choir's Sunday program increased by 25%. Ronald Reagan dubbed the Choir **"AMERICA'S CHOIR,"** a name that has stayed since that time.

The Choir's first digital recording (CD), *The Power and the Glory,* was released by Columbia records. This recording had been previously released in 1970 and 1972 on LP vinyl.

Aside from producing the music itself, the music staff (under the direction of the Choir president) became responsible for desired organizational changes in the Choir. Paramount among these was the need to know what the Choir membership really was. The membership rolls contained about 410 names, many of whom had shown only minimal recent activity. We had observed over time that some members came and went at their whim even though there were attempts to track attendance. After counseling with staff, President Evans and the First Presidency approved an attendance policy requiring a minimum of 75% attendance. Later that was increased to 80% overall with balance between rehearsals and performances. A leave-of-absence policy was instituted to allow members to take time for family, employment, and other priority circumstances without jeopardizing their Choir membership. The inservice auditions begun by Brother Welch and me were continued. Eventually, attendance at specified mandatory rehearsals was required before a member was eligible to sing in performances. Over the next few months the total membership stabilized around 350 active members whose morale and spiritual commitment gradually increased. A few members chose or were encouraged to leave the Choir because they were not pleased with the new policies.

1984: WENDELL M. SMOOT, JR., a finance and investment executive, was appointed president of the Choir. He served until 2001.

LINDA MARGETTS began serving as a Temple Square Organist and is still serving in 2017.

1982 | 1984 | 1986 | 1989

SEPTEMBER 1982: CLAY CHRISTIANSEN was named a Tabernacle organist, and has now served in that position for thirty-five years. He wrote the music for the Hymn, "In Fasting We Approach Thee."

1986: The Choir won an Emmy Award for *Christmas Sampler*, a 1986 KSL Television special broadcast. The Choir has since received two additional Emmy awards for special programs, and a Governor's award for "30 Years of Continuous Programming" in 1989.

Natural attrition of Choir membership requires periodic induction of new singers. Because we had observed that some members may have entered or stayed in the Choir for the wrong reasons, we published a set of priorities for current and prospective members. These included the individual's—

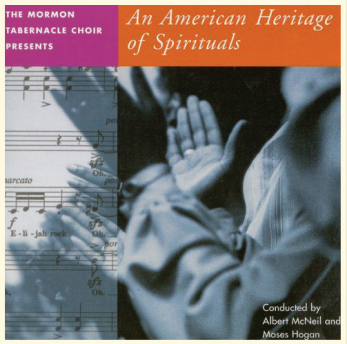
1. *Personal relationship with God*
2. *Relationship to family (spouse, children, loved ones)*
3. *Occupational pursuits and responsibilities*
4. *Volunteer membership by calling to the Tabernacle Choir.*

With these priorities in mind, my staff and I made several attempts to standardize the audition process before we succeeded in synchronizing the demands of Choir membership with the members' needs. Since we were not allowed to recruit members, we had to learn to anticipate the Choir's staffing needs. Over time a three-step audition process was developed. First came the candidate's volunteer application followed by our request for a bishop's recommendation. If accepted, the applicant then presented a specified tape-recorded audition. Next the applicant's knowledge of and ability to use music fundamentals was tested. Successful completion of these steps earned an in-person vocal audition before a committee.

The whole process extended over a period of three months, during which the audition committee made several contacts with the applicant. This gave the committee

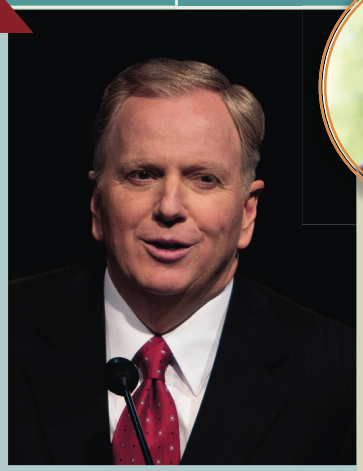
APRIL 1991: RICHARD ELLIOTT became a Tabernacle organist, and was named Principal Organist in 2007. He continues in that position to this date.

FEBRUARY 4, 1997: The Choir released their first album of spirituals, *An American Heritage of Spirituals.* The selections were arranged by Moses Hogan, an internationally recognized composer, arranger, and conductor. For this recording, the Choir was directed by Hogan—who was assisted by Albert McNeil.



1991 1992 1997 1999

JANUARY 1992: LLOYD NEWELL was named as the new permanent voice of *Music and the Spoken Word.* He had been serving as the temporary announcer since November 1991.



MAY 9, 1999: CRAIG JESSOP was introduced to the Choir as the fourteenth musical director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. He had been serving as the assistant musical director for several months.

OCTOBER 16, 1999: The first rehearsal of the **ORCHESTRA AT TEMPLE SQUARE** was held, under the direction of conductor **BARLOW BRADFORD**. President Gordon B. Hinckley had announced the formation of the Orchestra to accompany and add new dimension to the Choir broadcasts, concerts and tours. Orchestra members participate as volunteers, as do Choir members.

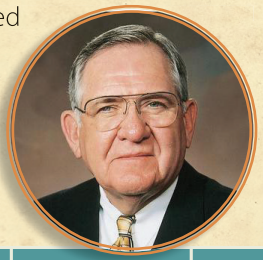
opportunity to evaluate the attitude, personality, and desire of the applicant. All audition results were screened by the committee, and the candidates were assigned to one of three categories: accepted, rejected, or undecided. Final decisions were made by the music director and often required wrestling with the Spirit. On occasion applicants were accepted or rejected against the evidence we had collected. Often these decisions were later ratified by unforeseen circumstances and even by testimonies relating to patriarchal blessings.

Successful applicants were then either inducted according to the Choir's calendar and personnel needs or they were placed on a waiting list for anticipated openings. Because of the orderliness of the process, immediate benefits to the Choir were observed. Similar audition processes continue in today's Choir. Indeed, "God moves in mysterious ways."

Brother Welch had succeeded in establishing upper and lower age limits for Choir membership, but these had not become fully operational. Because of past controversy and member dismay over Choir releases, President Kimball asked for more equitable procedures for induction and release of members. He asked that President Evans and I develop a consistent retirement policy. Our first proposal concurred with Brother Welch's minimum and maximum ages of membership (30 and 65 years, respectively) with mandatory retirement at age 65 or after twenty-five years of service, whichever came first. The First Presidency countered this

APRIL 2000: The completion of the Conference Center—the new 21,000 seat venue for general conferences. Many weekly and special Choir performances have taken place in this remarkable new building.

NOVEMBER 2000: Businessman **FRED M. "MAC" CHRISTENSEN** was appointed president of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.



2003: IGOR GRUPPMAN, a native of Kiev, Ukraine, and a member of the BYU music faculty at the time, was appointed Conductor of the Orchestra at Temple Square. He is also Concertmaster of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra.

MARCH 2003: The Choir began its own recording label, called "Mormon Tabernacle Choir," —increasing the Choir's control over the content and timing of their recordings while also improving earnings. The Choir's website at **mormontabernaclechoir.org** was also launched.

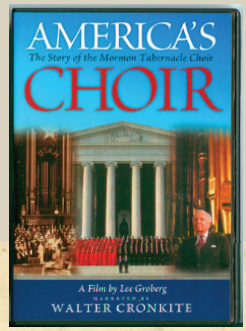
NOVEMBER 12, 2003: Choir president "Mac" Christensen accepted the National Medal of Arts award on behalf of the Choir from President George W. Bush at a White House ceremony.

2000 2002 2003 2004

DECEMBER 2000: The first Mormon Tabernacle Choir Christmas Concert to be recorded at the LDS Conference Center for subsequent CD/DVD release and PBS broadcast featured singer Gladys Knight and actress Roma Downey.

FEBRUARY 8, 2002: During the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, the Choir performed at the Opening Ceremonies—broadcast worldwide and seen by an estimated 3.5 billion viewers.

2004: Lee Groberg produced an hour-long television documentary for PBS titled *America's Choir,* an intimate documentary about the Choir and its history. Well-known author Heidi Swinton was the writer for the program. She also wrote the similarly titled book that told the Choir's story in print. A number of media and music luminaries, including Charles Osgood, John Williams, Angela Lansbury, and Sting reminisced. The program was narrated by Walter Cronkite.



proposal with 30, 55, and 15 years, respectively. When that standard was superimposed on the current Choir roster, it was apparent that nearly half of the Choir would be retired immediately. We countered with 30, 60, and 20 years, also requesting a three-year period in which to bring membership to those levels. Our counterproposal was accepted. When the policy was announced to Choir members, their responses varied from sighs of relief to "I'll believe it when I see it." Accordingly, it was incumbent upon us to abide strictly by this policy, regardless of the vocal and musical capacities of the members it affected. Careful adherence to the new standard developed a base for consistency and trust that would be needed to initiate other administrative and musical changes.

Almost immediately upon assumption of the directorship I began the slow process of bringing the Tabernacle Choir into the twentieth century, hopefully before the century was over. A choir this large is a nineteenth-century construct, especially for a choir that operates continuously in the broadcasting, recording, and concert worlds. Choral music, particularly in the United States, changed dramatically beginning in the 1950s, largely because of the growth of elite choral programs in universities. Choirs became more mobile, both physically and in their ability to modify the sound they produced to fit a wider variety of musical literature. We started by teaching vocal techniques that allowed the Choir to sing in different styles, Bach versus Brahms, hymns versus anthems, folk songs versus contemporary sounds. The tutti-frutti richness of the sound sometimes had to be reduced to

MARCH 28, 2008: MACK WILBERG began serving as the music director of the Choir and continues to the present date. He had been an associate director since 1999.

MAY 27, 2008: The Choir's Facebook page was begun. Today there are over 500,000 followers.

2005 2007 2008 2009

APRIL 5, 2005: The Choir's 1959 *Handel: Messiah* recording was inducted into the 2004 National Recording Registry. The Registry was created by Congress to promote and support audio preservation. Each year the Librarian of Congress selects 50 sound recordings to add to the registry.

MAY 5, 2005: The Choir launched a digital newsletter called *Choir Notes* that now has over 70,000 subscribers. Subscribe at **mormontabernaclechoir.org/connect**

JULY 2007: ANDREW UNSWORTH became a Tabernacle organist at age 37, serving as the thirteenth full-time tabernacle organist.

MARCH 27, 2009: RYAN MURPHY was appointed associate music director of the Choir. He also serves as the conductor of the Temple Square Chorale, the preparatory ensemble for new singers in Choir service.

vanilla. The tradition of the Tabernacle organ underpinning all songs had to give way to singing some literature without accompaniment. And, of course, a wider variety of music was introduced, not without controversy.

Slow progress on other fronts continued. Eventually, President Kimball assigned responsibility for the Choir to Elder Gordon B. Hinckley of the Quorum of the Twelve. Elder Hinckley began a continuing dialogue with President Evans, staff, and me about the Choir's long-range future that continued into President Hinckley's tenure in the First Presidency and as President of the Church. Elder Hinckley had a vision for the Choir that reached into the beginning of the twenty-first century. Everything we developed was a team effort toward that vision. The addition of Donald Ripplinger as the associate music director and administrative assistant was inspired. His influence on the Choir's musical development has never been appropriately chronicled. Brother Ripplinger's years of experience in choral music education became a fertile field for experimentation with both musical and administrative strategies.

Next in importance (after my own good fortune to marry her) was my decision to appoint JoAnn Ottley to the musical staff as the vocal coach. Her professional reputation as a singer at home and across the country spoke to her qualifications. She became the primary source for vocal care, training, and rehabilitation of Choir members. I have

2013: The Mormon Tabernacle Choir's top five most-watched videos on YouTube 2013:

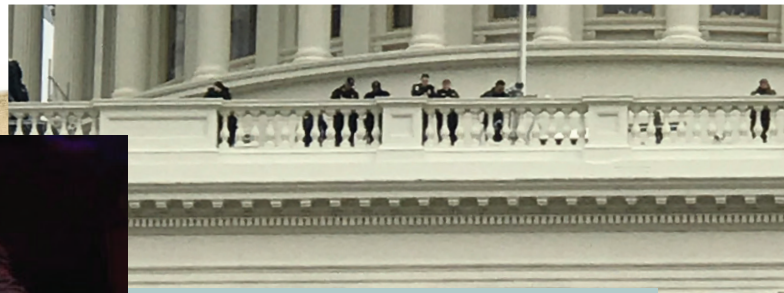
#5: "Over the Rainbow"

#4: "Battle Hymn of the Republic"

#3: "Silent Night" with guest artist David Archuleta

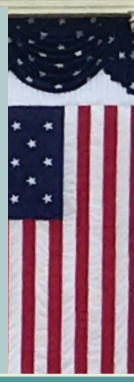
#2: "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"

#1: "Bring Him Home" with guest artist Alfie Boe



JANUARY 20, 2017: Mormon Tabernacle Choir performs "America the Beautiful" for the inauguration of Donald J. Trump, 45th President of the United States .

APRIL 2017: Total views of the Choir on the YouTube video channel reached 80 million.

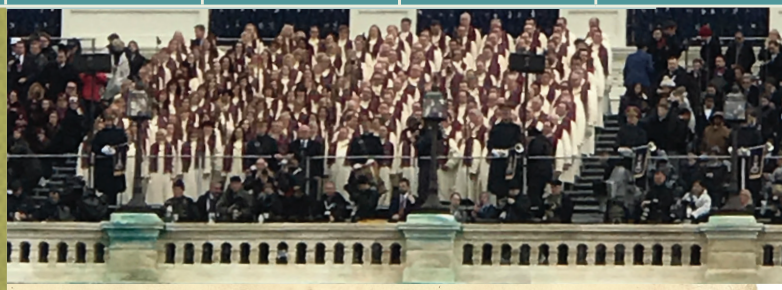


2012 2013 2017

JUNE 12, 2012: The Choir's Twitter account was launched. There are presently more than 96,000 subscribers.

AUGUST 1, 2012: RONALD B. JARRETT became president of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. He is the first president to have previously been a member of the Choir, having been a singing member from 1999 to 2008. In 2008 he had been named an assistant to the Choir president.

OCTOBER 31, 2012: The Choir initiated its YouTube video channel. By the end of 2016, it had received 70 million views.



Sources: Dr. Michael Hicks, *The Mormon Tabernacle Choir: A Biography* (2015); Heidi Swinton, *America's Choir* (2004); Charles Jeffrey Calman, *The Mormon Tabernacle Choir* (1979); J. Spencer Cornwall, *A Century of Singing: The Salt Lake Mormon Tabernacle Choir* (1958); "Mormon Tabernacle Choir Music Directors—Past to Present," *Mormon Tabernacle Choir Blog*. See also the website *Mormon Music.org*

always maintained that the inspired purpose of my call as music director was to acquire JoAnn's services. She and Don Ripplinger together developed prototypical programs for inservice training that eventually became the Choir Training School that exists today.

Throughout this period Robert Bowden and I were invited to attend recurring discussions with various committees of General Authorities regarding the continuing mission and purpose of the Mormon Youth organization. The ages of its personnel did not equate to other "youth" organizations in the music world. There was concern about its competition for personnel at local colleges and universities. Mormon Youth's functions sometimes overlapped with those of the Tabernacle Choir, not only in the physical spaces on Temple Square, but also financially. Robert and I made several proposals with only minor effect.

Eventually, the coincidence of our pending retirements, the near completion of the Conference Center, and the approaching Winter Olympics brought these discussions to a head. It was evident that there was a continuing need for an adult, semi-professional orchestra at Church Headquarters to support the general music needs of the Church. Music director-designate Craig Jessop, at the request of President Hinckley, prepared a brilliant set of recommendations that resulted in the establishment of the Orchestra at Temple Square, the Temple Square Chorale, and the Tabernacle Choir Training School. Before my retirement Sister Ottley and I were assigned to structure and develop the curriculum for the Choir School. Beginning in 1999, we administered and taught in the school for the next four years.

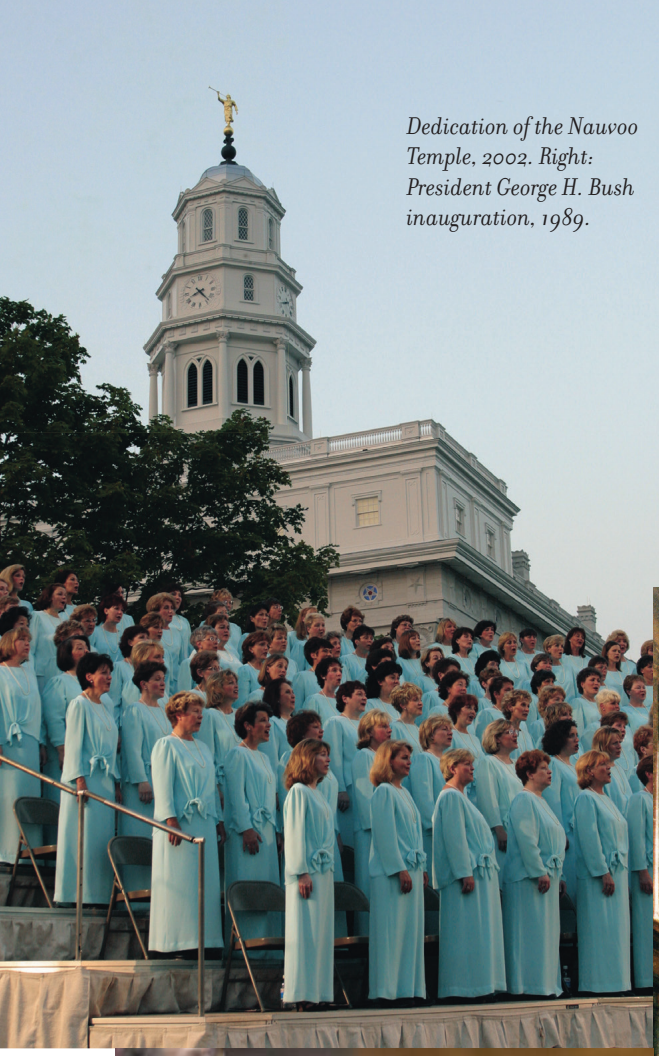
The resulting metamorphosis of the Choir over two decades, tedious and careful as it was, prepared the Choir for new directorship and an expanded role in activities envisioned for the physical facilities that did not then exist, i.e., the Conference Center and the refurbished Tabernacle. All this was done was under the aegis of inspired priesthood leadership and the influence of the Spirit.

During my tenure as music director from 1974 to 1999 I was responsible for nearly thirteen hundred broadcasts of *Music and the Spoken Word,* and planned and directed more than thirty commercial recordings. I prepared the musical portion of over twenty major tours and many local concerts and appearances for visiting conventions and dignitaries. My choir director's life was also a public life—serving in my own ward and stake, serving in the community, participating on committees, speaking at events and service clubs, guest conducting, and presenting workshops at home and abroad, all while retaining a small adjunct faculty position at the University of Utah.

"So, Brother Ottley, what did you do the rest of the week?"

* *Musical Staff— Conductors:* Jerold Ottley, Donald Ripplinger, Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, Barlow Bradford. *Organists:* Alexander Schreiner, Roy Darley, Robert Cundick, John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, Linda Margetts. *Vocal Coach:* JoAnn Ottley.

Administrative Staff—Presidents: Isaac Stewart, Oakley Evans, Wendell Smoot. *Administrative Assistants:* Stanford Darger, Udell Poulsen, Herold Gregory. *Executive Secretaries:* Meredith Barker, Alice Swensen, LaVon Rudd, Ann Turner, Josephene Foulger, Julie Rohde. *Unsung heroes:* a few part-time staffers and many volunteers who constituted the wardrobe and music library committees, and ad hoc tour committees. ■



Dedication of the Nauvoo Temple, 2002. Right: President George H. Bush inauguration, 1989.

Above: 1998 Europe tour, the basilica at El Escorial, near Madrid, Spain.

Above: Choir with President George W. Bush, 2001. Lower right: Inaugural parade for President Ronald Reagan, 1981.

THE Twenty-first Century Evolution OF THE TABERNACLE CHOIR

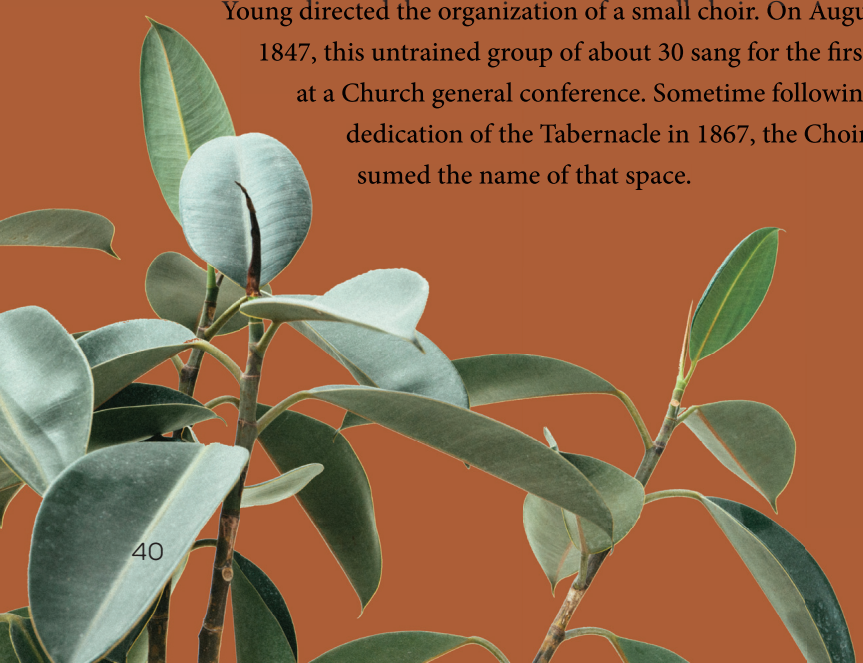
by Michael F. Moody
Former Chairman, General Music Committee

The Choir during the first 150 years

Just three months after the organization of the Church in 1830, Joseph Smith received a revelation that inaugurated a lasting tradition of music in the Church. The revelation instructed his wife, Emma, "an elect lady," to compile a collection of hymns to be sung in Church meetings (see D&C 25:11).

From those early days music has played a vital role in the Church. Members felt a desire to express heartfelt convictions through music. As the Saints gathered from culturally diverse places such as Wales, England, Scandinavia, and parts of America, they brought their own musical heritage. The gathering resulted in a rich, eclectic combining of musical styles that created a diverse expression of unified beliefs. This unique musical tradition brought warmth of spirit and brightness of hope to the Saints wherever they landed and whatever their lot.

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir had its genesis in the Salt Lake Valley. Not long after the first pioneer company arrived, Brigham Young directed the organization of a small choir. On August 22, 1847, this untrained group of about 30 sang for the first time at a Church general conference. Sometime following the dedication of the Tabernacle in 1867, the Choir assumed the name of that space.



View of Evan Stephens conducting the Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir in Festival Hall, Chicago, Illinois, for The World's Columbian Exposition, September 8, 1893. Reprint by C. R. Savage.

The Choir since 2000

Fast-forward to the year 2000. Since its beginning and over the decades, the Choir has changed, improved, and adapted to meet the needs and opportunities of each new generation, always proclaiming the truths of the Restored Gospel with luminous light. From those early days the Choir has grown not only in size, but more importantly in scope and quality, earning praise and accolades over the years.

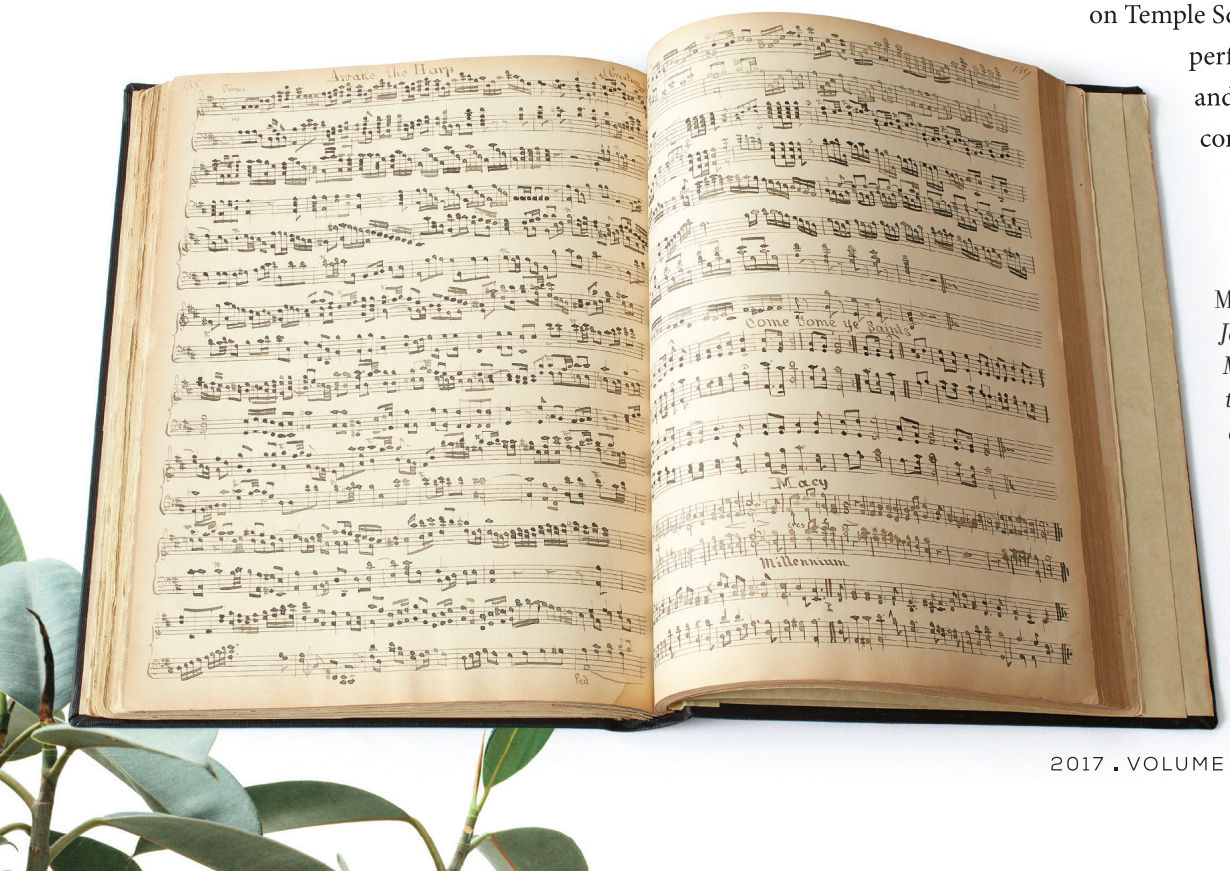
Originally the Choir focused on singing in general conferences. Since 1929, besides continuing this tradition, the Choir has performed the weekly *Music and the Spoken Word* broadcast, now heard on more than 2,000 radio and television stations throughout the world. The Choir and Orchestra on Temple Square rehearse and perform non-stop—week after week, year after year. Additional performance obligations include the annual Christmas and Pioneer Day concerts, together with numerous other concerts, programs, and special events the year round. Periodically the Choir and Orchestra make recordings and undertake rigorous tours.

Today the Choir ranks as one of the oldest, largest, and most recognizable choirs in the world. Due in part to the weekly radio broadcasts and numerous recordings since 1929, the Choir has become the face of Mormonism for many. In addition to delighting audiences worldwide, it serves as an ambassador for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Clearly, this unique musical organization transcends the boundaries of cultures and generations, uniting people through the gift of music.

Staffing the Choir

The first recognized director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir was John Parry, an early convert from Wales. Fourteen directors have since followed Parry. One of these, called in 1869 by Brigham Young, was George Careless—assigned to organize a choir sufficiently large to fill the spacious new Tabernacle with music. Careless did so by recruiting members from a number of smaller choirs in the Salt Lake Valley to comprise a 300-member choir. Other conductors, organists, and administrative leaders would follow.

In 1974 Jerold Ottley became music director and served for 25 years; Craig Jessop replaced him in 1999 and was replaced in turn by Mack Wilberg in 2008. Today the director is supported by key staff members, including associate music director Ryan Murphy; Tabernacle Organists Richard Elliott, Clay Christiansen, and Andrew Unsworth; Temple Square Organists Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts; the conductor of the Orchestra at Temple Square Igor Gruppman; and the conductor of the Bells on Temple Square LeAnna Willmore. The Orchestra at Temple Square is an integral part of the performing ensembles, providing an immeasurable luster to the work of the Choir. The Bells on Temple Square adds sparkle to performances of the Choir and gives its own biannual concerts.



Musical Scores *written by Joseph J. Daynes and Robert M. Cundick, on display at the Church History Museum exhibit "The Salt Lake Tabernacle: Celebrating 150 Years."*

And Saints and Angels Sing, *by Fred D. Howard, oil on canvas, 2013. Courtesy Jerold and JoAnn Ottley.*

In the year 2000 Mac Christensen, a seasoned businessman with Church administrative experience, became Choir president and assumed responsibility for managing the ever-increasing demands on the Choir. He served until 2012, when he was succeeded by Ron Jarrett, the current Choir president, who is assisted by a general manager, an administrative manager, two executive secretaries, and a legal coordinator. In addition to the music and administrative staff, the Choir could not accomplish its massive work without the devoted Choir, Orchestra, and Bell members and a host of unsung workers who voluntarily serve as stage crew, library staff, costume coordinators, AV specialists and other technical coordinators, sound crew, hosts, and ushers.

Meeting the needs of a new generation

The Choir's mission is to further the work of the Lord through music. The music staff has focused on several things to achieve this.

Concept: The staff works together to consider new and innovative ways to enhance the musical experience of listeners. The Christmas programs now feature celebrity singers and narrators, elaborate sets, dancing, and unexpected elements that bring wonder and delight to packed audiences. A recent example was the 2014 Christmas program featuring Elmo, Big Bird and other *Sesame Street* characters who sang and interacted with the Choir and Orchestra.

Presentation: The music chosen for concerts and recordings is not just a series of pleasing musical selections, but a body of works interwoven to give form and direction to the whole. The staff artfully arranges factors such as style, tempo, and mood under a common theme to provide a satisfying listening experience. For example, the album, *Peace Like a River,* begins and ends with the quiet ringing of a bell. The intervening selections are placed to create an overall sense of quiet peace through a flowing musical form. Such presentations transport the listener on a soul-satisfying journey from beginning to end.

Repertoire: The Choir continues to broaden its repertoire, from beloved classics to music in the language of a new generation. Their offerings range from classical works and hymns to African American spirituals, contemporary

music, and familiar Primary songs that speak to young and old alike.

The Spoken Word: The fresh, truth-based messages delivered each week by Lloyd Newell are geared to a broad audience. Eye-catching visuals illuminate and interpret the messages and the music. Masterful camera work produces artful groupings and close-ups that capture the variety of emotions in the faces of the singers.

Through the decades the music and administrative personnel have brought their own special gifts to their callings while building upon the accomplishments of those who held the callings previously. The results have lifted the Choir to the ranks of the most prestigious and best-loved choirs in the world, revered by throngs of devotees across nations and cultures.

Mouthpiece, *by Fred D. Howard, oil on canvas, 2013. Courtesy Lloyd and Karmel Newell.*

What does the future hold?

Now the digital age is upon us. The Choir launched its own website in 2003; a Facebook page and Twitter account were added a few years later. In 2012 the Choir launched a YouTube channel enabling people worldwide to experience the music of the Choir and Orchestra. To more fully accomplish its mission, the Choir now employs other social media as well as live streaming of its weekly broadcast and major concerts.

There is no shortage of talented individuals full of know-how, innovation, and imagination who will continue to bless and influence the world through their creative efforts as the Church continues to gain in prominence and influence. We are living in an era when each day brings a myriad of possibilities. There will no doubt be a continuing, ever-adapting approach to the Choir's repertoire and presentation that will speak to rising generations.

As we read in Alma, "By small and simple things are great things brought to pass" (Alma 37:6). Who could have imagined that from such humble beginnings the Choir would gently blossom into a group of such notoriety and influence? Today's world is constantly changing, but with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's sure foundation, one can envision its having an even greater impact through the years and decades ahead. ■

Early Choir Broadcasts

AN ANNOUNCER'S PERSPECTIVE

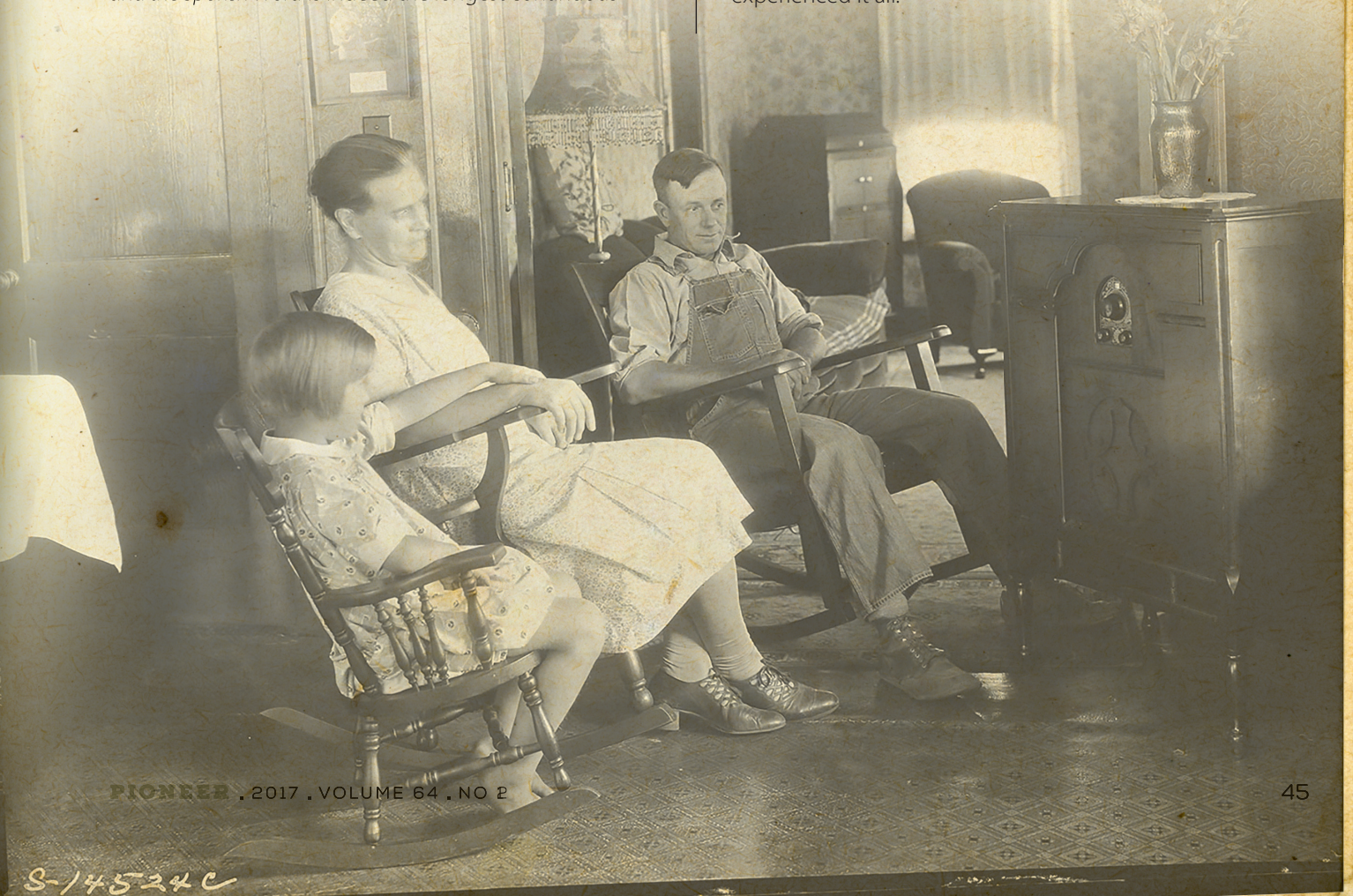
by J. Spencer Kinard

The voice of *Music and the Spoken Word*, 1972–1990

It's often said that the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's weekly radio broadcast is the oldest in the world. It's almost the oldest, but not quite. In the United States, *The Grand Ole Opry* in Nashville started in November, 1925, as the *WSM Barn Dance* just a few months after radio station WSM went on the air. It was renamed *The Grand Ole Opry* in 1927.

"Music and the Spoken Word"—not called that yet—was first broadcast July 15, 1929. That first broadcast went coast-to-coast on NBC and originated at Salt Lake City's KSL, which first went on the air in 1927. However, *Music and the Spoken Word* is indeed the longest continuous nationwide network broadcast—the qualifier being "nationwide network"—and was inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame in 2010. No matter how it is defined, the broadcast has survived nearly a century of change and is still going.

A lot of history has unfolded in the eighty-plus years since the sound of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's beautiful music was picked up by KSL's lone microphone suspended above the Choir and sent, scratchy as it was, to the smattering of radio sets across the country. The technological changes occurring since that long-ago midsummer day are almost beyond comprehension. Early radio transmissions are as different from today's digital sound as horses and buggies are from rocket ships, yet the Choir continues to thrive, having lived through and experienced it all.



The changes have not been just technological. World political struggles, geographical boundaries, political and cultural mores, medicine, and fashion have all changed dramatically during this time. Even the content of the program itself has changed. When something has been around as long as the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's weekly program, current audiences may think that what they see and hear today is how it's always been, but not so.

"Once more we welcome you within these walls, with music and the spoken word, from the Crossroads of West."

That's the way I began the Tabernacle Choir's weekly radio-TV program Sunday, February 27, 1972—my first Choir broadcast. That's the way Elder Richard L. Evans had done it for many years before me, and that's the way I continued to do it for the next eighteen-plus years of my tenure. But that's not the way it was in the beginning.

Looking at copies of Choir broadcast scripts from 1930 to 1933, we see the beginnings of certain well-known phrases: "Once more we welcome you …," "Crossroads of the West," "Again we leave you…," "…the everlasting hills," "May peace be with you…." Here are some representative quotations from those early scripts demonstrating the often flowery opening and closing lines, together with the embryonic phrases that evolved into the mainstay of Richard Evans' writing.

Monday, July 28, 1930, 3:00pm (NBC)

This script was read one year after the first broadcast on July 15, 1929—about one month after 24-year-old Richard Evans, an employee of KSL, became involved with the program. According to a Church Information Service news release in 1959, Evans "was assigned to write, produce and announce the Tabernacle Choir broadcasts about ten months after they started as a national series."

Opening announcement: "Ladies and gentlemen, again we bring you greetings from the Tabernacle at Salt Lake City, Utah, with another program presented by the National Broadcasting Company and associated stations, originating with KSL. You will hear the LDS Tabernacle Choir under the direction of Anthony C. Lund, and the great organ with Alexander Schreiner at the console."

That opening announcement was used for the next six months—when it was replaced by the following:

Monday, January 19, 1931, 4:15pm (NBC)

"Greetings, ladies and gentlemen. The changing of a mid-nineteenth century sagebrush waste to a cultural outpost of the West was evidenced by the erection of one of the world's largest auditoriums, the Mormon Tabernacle, from which unique structure we bring you weekly at this hour sacred and secular masterworks of music presented by a choir of 300 voices, with accompaniments and solo presentations from the great Tabernacle organ, world-famous for its mellow majesty."

A copy of another script also dated January 19, 1931, contains the simpler announcement used during the last months of 1930. Which script was actually read on January 19 we don't know. But the longer, more elaborate opening was certainly used on January 26, and it continued to be read through April 27 of that year. January 19 likely marked the first use of the new opening.

It was also on January 19 that the Choir sang as its opening number, perhaps for the first time on the broadcast, "As the Dew from Heaven Distilling"—the Joseph J. Daynes hymn that later became the closing theme song of the weekly broadcast.

Initially, NBC was not consistent in designating a day or time for the weekly Choir broadcast, something fairly typical of early radio and network programming. One week, the Choir might be heard on Monday; the next, on Tuesday. And the broadcast could occur anytime between noon and early evening—although NBC was consistent in starting the program on the quarter hour.

Here are a couple of similar opening announcements originating about a year apart:

Monday, May 4, 1931, 3:15pm (NBC)

"Greetings, Ladies and Gentlemen: Those who live in the tops of the western mountains take pleasure in presenting for the nation's entertainment Salt Lake's Tabernacle Choir, with matchless music from Salt Lake's world-famous Tabernacle organ."

Tuesday, May 24, 1932, 12:45pm (NBC)

"Good afternoon [it was still morning on the western seaboard, of course] from coast-to-coast: Greetings to all from the tops of the western mountains. We take pleasure in presenting as a weekly concert feature Salt Lake's Tabernacle Choir with matchless music from the world-famed Tabernacle organ."

The last broadcast on NBC was on Tuesday, August 30, 1932, at 12:45pm. The switch from NBC to CBS came about largely through the efforts of two LDS men—G. Stanley McAllister and Earl J. Glade—who were connected to William S. Paley, founder of the Columbia Broadcast System (CBS).

Stan McAllister, who would serve as president of the New York Stake from 1960 to 1967, was employed at CBS in 1929 as Director of Construction and Buildings. In 1932 he persuaded his boss, Bill Paley, and the brethren in Salt Lake City to consider moving the Choir broadcast to CBS.

Earl Glade was mayor of Salt Lake City and General Manager of KSL. He was not happy with the varying day and time of the Choir broadcast—or with the generally lackluster treatment given the broadcast by NBC. The story told by the Glade family is that when Mr. Paley came to Utah in 1932 to drum up business for his new network of affiliates, Glade (who had furnished the lobby of KSL with furniture from his own home) told Paley that he would switch affiliations to CBS if Paley would agree to schedule the Choir broadcast on Sunday mornings and keep it there. So it happened and so it is.

Sunday, September 4, 1932, 9:00am (CBS)

This was the premiere broadcast on the CBS radio network. For the first time, "As the Dew from Heaven Distilling" is listed as the "theme song" of the program with the organ playing through once in solo, then again softly under the opening announcement:

" 'Ring out, ye crystal spheres! / Once bless our human ears / If ye have power to touch our senses so; / And let your silver chime / Move in melodious time; / And let the bass of heaven's deep organ blow / And with your nine-fold harmony / Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.'

"With these immortal words by John Milton, we beckon you through the portals of the great Mormon Tabernacle, shadowed by the six-spired temple and surrounded by the everlasting hills of the rugged, open West.

"This is the first of the programs of the Columbia Broadcasting System, originating with radio station KSL in Salt Lake City, featuring the music of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Organ *[this is the first noted use of 'Mormon' in the Choir's name]*.

"It is the Hour Harmonious when nature, art, science, music—are tuned to sweet accord *[the term 'Hour Harmonious' became a regular element of future broadcasts]*."

The opening continued:

"It is the hour in which we invite all men to unburden the stern cares of life, and to take comfort in the soul-satisfying peace which comes with knowing that 'The Glory of God is Intelligence.'"

It would be several years before "The Spoken Word" as a regular three-minute sermonette would evolve as a standard part of the program, but this long opening announcement, with a few other longer musical introductions or closing comments, were the first steps in that evolution.

That first CBS broadcast concluded with the organ playing "As the Dew …" under this closing announcement:

"This hour from Temple Square is ended—unless perchance something of its spirit may be carried over in a human heart here and there—until next week, when we beckon you again through the portals of the great Mormon Tabernacle, surrounded by the everlasting hills.

"The Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir was conducted by Anthony C. Lund. Frank W. Asper was at the great organ. This program, originating with KSL in Salt Lake City, has been released by eighty-five coast-to-coast stations.

"This is the Columbia Broadcasting System."

There was no announcer credit mentioned, as had been the case in most of the NBC broadcasts, but written on the script and not announced was "Continuity by Richard L. Evans." Since Evans had done most of the announcing and all of the writing of the broadcasts from mid-1930 on, it is assumed Evans was the announcer for the first CBS broadcast.

The inaugural broadcast on July 15, 1929, was announced by Ted Kimball, organist Edward P. Kimball's son. While Evans did most of the subsequent announcing, some scripts simply had a blank for the announcer's name, **"This is _____ speaking,"** indicating that the announcer changed and wasn't always known until the last minute. Dave Elton is written in on some scripts.

A note at the bottom of the timing sheet for the first CBS broadcast reads, "Dr. Lund: Please ask [the] Choir for absolute quiet throughout and for care in standing and sitting." Some things never change.

Here are a few more early announcements exhibiting phrasing that later became standard:

Sunday, September 11, 1932, 9:00am (CBS)

"Once more we beckon you through the portals of the Great Mormon Tabernacle … *[first noted use of 'Once more…']*."

Sunday, December 4, 1932, 10:00am (CBS)

"From within these hallowed walls we greet you on another Sabbath in the spirit of peace and friendliness—carried to the far ends of the country with the rich, warm tones of the time-mellowed organ."

Note the time change. Over the years, the broadcast start-time shifted between 8:30 and 10:00, but it was always on Sunday morning. Eventually it settled in at 9:30am.

Sunday, January 1, 1933, 10:00am (CBS)

"America of the Western Mountains sends greetings to all America, as we, with you, close another chapter in the eternity of our lives, and welcome the glorious renewal of faith, hope and opportunity. We men of earth have time in common, and the record of our days stands forever.

"This is the Hour Harmonious, presented for the Columbia network from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City."

Sunday, January 15, 1933, 10:00am (CBS)

"Men are blest with the gift of life—the will to partake of its sorrows and joys, and the promise of glorious eternities yet to come. What more could an all-wise Creator bestow?

"This is the Hour Harmonious, presented for the Columbia Network from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. From within these friendly walls we greet you on another Sabbath."

Sunday, March 26, 1933, 9:30–10:30am (CBS)

This was the first of the hour-long programs that continued through most of the 1930s. Each song the Choir sang was introduced by the announcer (not identified in the script, but probably Evans), who read the opening words of the song. The program closed with the first noted version of what eventually became the iconic closing line of 'May peace be with you, this day and always.' The announcement was:

"Peace be with you throughout the week. Another Hour Harmonious is numbered with programs of the past."

Sunday, August 20, 1933, 8:30am (CBS)

The broadcast file has no copies of scripts between March 26 and August 13, 1933. The August 20 script includes the first noted use of "Gently Raise the Sacred Strain" by William W. Phelps and Thomas C. Griggs. It is listed on the script as the "opening theme," with the Choir singing the first two lines and then humming under the opening announcement. This became the standard opening for the program until sometime early in the twenty-first century:

"'Gently raise the sacred strain / For the Sabbath's come again / That man may rest and return thanks / For life and the joy of living.' This thoughtful Sabbath Hour is presented for the Columbia Network from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. The Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir is conducted by Albert J. Southwick. Organ solo presentations will be played by Alexander Schreiner." *(The announcer was David Elton.)*

And so continued the format of the program through the rest of the 1930s.

According to Steven Evans, Richard L. Evans' son, the first "Spoken Word" was delivered Sunday, February 4, 1940, and was titled "The Element of Chance" (broadcast no. 546). In his book *And the Spoken Word* published in 1945, Richard Evans referred to this short address as his first "sermonette." It seems that "The Spoken Word" became a regular part of the program from that date on, although it is uncertain when the title of the program changed to "Music and the Spoken Word."

Sunday, October 8, 1933, 9:30–10:30am (CBS)

The opening announcement for the program on this October date makes mention of General Conference. The program went for an hour, so Conference apparently didn't begin until 10:30; hence the reference to "permitted as a prelude to the 104th…."

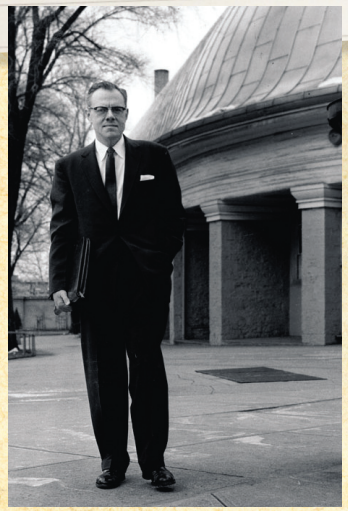
"Worshipful voices, blended with the time-mellowed voice of the Tabernacle organ, we welcome you once more within these friendly walls. … Assembled in this historic cultural landmark of the old pioneer West today are nearly ten thousand people, gathered from all America and abroad, who have come to worship, to meditate, to enjoy. This broadcast has been permitted as a prelude to the 104th Semi-Annual Conference of the LDS Church."

Sunday, December 31, 1933, 9:30am (CBS)

This is the last of the early Choir broadcast scripts in the file:

"Again we find ourselves together on another Sabbath, in the valleys of the western mountains, within the venerable walls of Temple Square in Salt Lake City.

"This is the last day of a dying year. A record of the past stands relentlessly, unchangeable, eternally. The record of the future is yet unwritten. They who write it well will greet this day a year hence with boundless joy and glowing happiness."



So wrote and spoke Richard L. Evans on December 31, 1933. He concluded the program with these words:

"This is the last day of a dying year. The end of a journey for many and the start of a journey for others. Life will go on very much the same tomorrow, but if we can bury with the dying year [all] doubt, despondency, selfishness and enmity and [a] score of other causes of most [of] our human ills and heartaches, the New Year will have been more than justified, and life for many will take on new meaning.

"As the fading harmonies of the Tabernacle organ and Choir carry our good wishes to the far ends of the country, we wish for you peace this day and through all the New Year. This thoughtful Sabbath Hour is ended.

"Your announcer—Richard Evans. This is the Columbia Broadcasting System."

The opening and closing announcements of that December 31 broadcast seem appropriate or even prophetic words for Evans' next 38 years of life, if not for the program itself.

Elder Richard L. Evans died unexpectedly of a viral infection November 1, 1971, at age 65. As a reporter for KSL, I covered his funeral and was anxious to find out and report on who would replace him. From November 8 until the last Sunday in February, 1972, Alan Jensen came down from Idaho Falls each Sunday to announce the program; he reused previous Spoken Word messages. Alan had substituted for Elder Evans during the previous ten years when Church or Rotary business took Elder Evans out of town. As the year ended and a new one began, I grew more and more anxious to learn who would be the new Choir announcer. Little did I realize that, during the last week of February, I would get my story. Ironically, however, I couldn't report it because I was the subject of the story, and I was obliged to say nothing until the Church's official announcement a couple of days later.

President N. Eldon Tanner informed me on Tuesday,

February 22 that the First Presidency had chosen me to take Elder Evans' place as Choir announcer and that they would like me to begin doing the announcing and the Spoken Word the following Sunday. He said the change would be announced on Thursday. I had been asked about six weeks earlier by Elder Gordon Hinckley to audition for the position, having been recommended by Paul Evans, the program's producer at the time (and a cousin of Richard Evans). I was 31, and I told Elder Hinckley that was a "scary thing to do." He said, "That's all right. You've been scared before, Spence. You'll get over it."

In the 88 years and counting since the Choir broadcast began, there have been between eight and ten temporary or substitute announcers.* But only three people have been asked to accept the position permanently: Elder Evans, me, and Lloyd Newell, who is now in his twenty-seventh year. It is not a paid position. Even though both Elder Evans and I worked for KSL in other assignments, neither we nor Newell were ever paid for doing the Choir broadcast. But neither are the Choir members paid. As Elder Hinckley told me, "There is something good about doing it as a volunteer."

In the preface to my first book, *The Worth of a Smile,* I wrote the following:

"As LDS people, we believe our leaders are guided and inspired by God in matters concerning the Church. If I believed that—and I did—then I had to believe that they, indeed, the Lord, knew better than I what course my life should take—that for whatever reason, as implausible as it all seemed, I was the one to stand at [that] time in the shadow of Richard L. Evans. I knew … I had no choice but to accept."

That, indeed, is the history of the Choir and the broadcast—to accept the assignment, do the best you can, and have faith the Lord will help you succeed. The people, places, events, and circumstances that have allowed the Choir to flourish and grow for more than a century and a half, and the broadcast to flourish for more than half that time, seem to have been guided and arranged by a higher power.

It's remarkable to think about the history of the Choir broadcast and the changes that both the program and the Choir have survived—advances in recording technology, the age of radio, the Depression, world wars, the invention of television, satellite technology, the Internet, and now the digital era. Through it all, the Choir continues to lift the hearts of men and women with music, words, and pictures.

There have been hundreds and hundreds of people responsible for the Choir broadcasts over the past 88 years. Some have been publicly acknowledged, most have worked unheralded in the background or unnamed on stage. Most important are the many singers and musicians who have freely given of their talents and abilities week after week, year after year, often at much personal sacrifice. Theirs is the legacy and accomplishment of the Choir and its weekly broadcast. There are dozens of recorded albums, YouTube postings, concerts and tours, but it is the enduring broadcast—the longest continuing nationwide network broadcast—that bestows a special place in history on the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

* In the three-and-a-half-year record of early broadcast scripts, the following principals are mentioned—conductors: Anthony C. Lund, B. Cecil Gates, Albert J. Southwick; organists: Alexander Schreiner, Frank W. Asper, Edward P. Kimball; announcers: Richard L. Evans, David Elton, Albert Southwick.

THE SALT LAKE TABERNACLE ORGAN

Celebrating 150 Years

A NEW EXHIBIT AT THE CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM

ON OCTOBER 6, 1867, a newly constructed pipe organ made its debut during the general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the 150 years that have followed, it has served as the iconic backdrop for meetings and events broadcast throughout the world. This famed instrument has influenced Latter-day Saint music, culture, and worship.

JOSEPH HARRIS RIDGES fell in love with organs as a young boy in London. At the age of 24, he moved to Australia, where he built his first instrument and became a Latter-day Saint. Brigham Young asked 35-year-old Joseph Harris Ridges to build the organ for the Tabernacle. Ridges started construction of the Tabernacle organ in 1866. Prior to the industrial revolution, organs were considered one of the most complicated man-made creations. Ridges only ever built two organs—the first in Sydney, Australia, and the second in the Salt Lake Tabernacle.

He modeled the Tabernacle organ after the Boston Music Hall organ, which he visited while purchasing building supplies in 1863.

"I am waiting patiently for the [Tabernacle] organ to be finished; then we can sing the gospel into the hearts of the people."

—Brigham Young

EVOLUTION

The organ has undergone several changes over the years. The most visual change occurred in 1915, when the casing was expanded 15 feet on each side to accommodate additional pipes. Today the organ has 11,623 pipes, 147 stops, and 206 ranks.

ORGANISTS

The organ itself is made of interconnected pieces of wood and metal; a trained musician brings it to life. The console of the organ is like the cockpit of a plane, with the organist as its pilot. More than 20 people have held the title of Tabernacle organist or assistant organist for the Tabernacle organ.

Organists wear block heel shoes that permit smooth transitions and greater reach when playing the pedals.

KEYBOARD, *by Fred D. Howard, oil on canvas, 2013. Courtesy of the Frank Asper family.*

BEHIND THE ORGAN'S tall gold-leafed pipes that are visible from the benches of the Tabernacle sit thousands of wooden and metal pipes of various sizes. Their respective sizes, shapes, and substance give the organ its distinctive sound.

ORGAN PIPES: *These pipes from the Salt Lake Tabernacle organ were used between 1867 and 1948.*

Spiritual Then Physical Creation, *by Fred D. Howard, oil on canvas, 2013. Courtesy Ryan and Jennifer Murphy.*

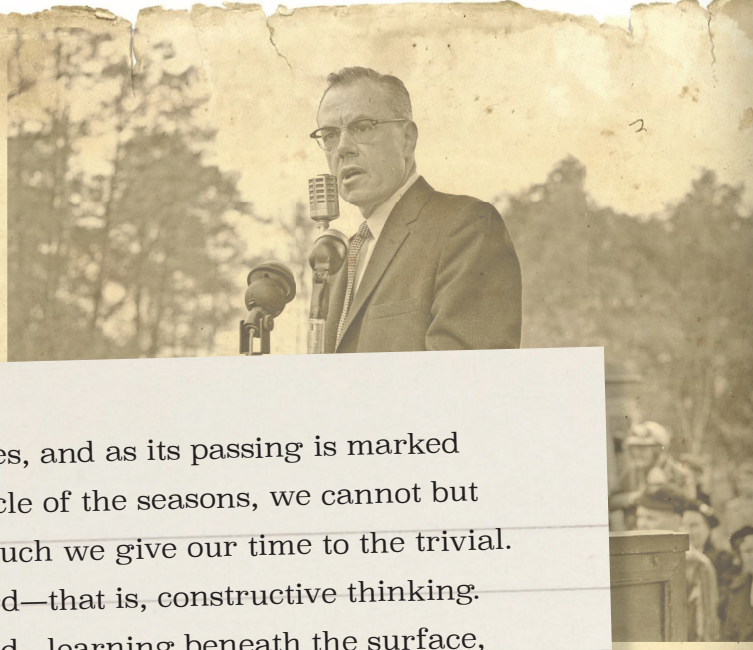
IN 1867, ONLY THOSE who visited Temple Square in Salt Lake City could hear the Salt Lake Tabernacle organ. Thanks to advances in broadcast and recording technology, individuals around the world can now enjoy the organ's sounds.

Microphone and Stand: *This RCA velocity microphone was used for Tabernacle Choir broadcasts during the 1930s.*

"I am very proud of that organ, as proud as the proudest father could be of a distinguished son, and I have the satisfaction of knowing that when I am laid away to rest that that organ will continue to stand as memorial of the trials and difficulties that were overcome by the pioneers, breathing out strains of sweet music to delight future generations." **—Joseph H. Ridges**

Above: Tabernacle Choir on stage of the Farris Opera House, November 22, 1911, Richmond, Ray County, Missouri. On the front row, L to R, John J. McClellan (organist), Willard A. Weihe (violinist), George W. Schweich (grandson of David Whitmer), Samuel O. Bennion (Central States Mission president), Bishop David A. Smith (Presiding Bishop's office), Evan Stephens (Tabernacle Choir Director, standing), Elder Heber J. Grant (Council of the Twelve), Katherine Schweich (great-granddaughter of David Whitmer), and Junius F. Wells; photo by George Edward Anderson. Below: postcard advertisement for Eastern tour of Mormon Tabernacle Choir, October 1911.

Above: Tabernacle Choir at banquet in the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City, American Land and Irrigation Exposition, November 2, 1911. Background: view of Cliff House, San Francisco, California. Below: Tabernacle Choir members sightseeing near the Cliff House, c. 1896.



"As time passes, and as its passing is marked by the cycle of the seasons, we cannot but question how much we give our time to the trivial. Thinking is hard—that is, constructive thinking. Learning is hard—learning beneath the surface, learning in deep dimension. Living is hard—disciplined living, with standards, principles, purpose; with consistency and following through.

"But life is much more than the motions and needs of the moment; more than merely putting in time; more than merely getting by; more than the perfunctory or reluctant filling of assignments. We must look beyond the surface, beyond the mere seeming to be, to the real substance—to increasing knowledge; to serving; to searching and not fearing to search; finding and not fearing to face facts—looking beyond the short and little look; beyond the trivial talk; beyond the little circle that repeats itself—but rather, repenting, improving, knowing better, doing better, being better, with high principles and high purpose.

"There is a song for each of us to sing, a song of great significance, as the cycle moves through the swift seasons."

Richard L. Evans, *Music and the Spoken Word,* 1964; reprinted in Evans' *Faith, Peace, and Purpose* (1966), 225–6.